

OCTOBER 22, 2007

The American Conservative

THE WANING POWER OF
HILLARY HATE



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AGAINST THE MACHINE

I just read with interest “Mutiny in the Valley” by Michael Brendan Dougherty (Oct. 8).

I, too, decided to get involved in the local races in Putnam County and ran against an incumbent for a legislative seat in the 5th District. My opponent was part of the local “machine,” and, like my friend Matt Neuringer said in the article, to get involved in local politics, you have two choices: “kiss the ring” or primary. I chose to primary, and with a budget of only \$1,000, I received nearly 35 percent of the vote running on an anti-illegal alien, anti-tax platform.

It was incredible to see how local Republicans did everything in their power to prevent me from getting on the ballot and then spent thousands of dollars to ensure my defeat. The chairman of the Putnam County Republican Party, Anthony Scannapieco, is also a chairman of the Board of Elections. Talk about a conflict of interest.

If anything, this race has emboldened me to continue in politics. The local Republican machine must be smashed, and a new populist Republican Party must take its place. It will be an uphill battle, but if we are to take back our Republic, we must do it one village, one town, and one county at a time.

RICK MONTES
Carmel, N.Y.

DIGITAL CRUSADE

I would like to thank you most sincerely for James Pinkerton’s wonderful article, “The Once and Future Christendom” (Sept. 10).

I, too, have often despaired at the possible passing of the Christian West, but it may not be too late to save it. The very people who have demonized it with such relish will no doubt be those who suffer most upon its demise.

Do you think there is any sense in forming a sort of international “Save Western Civilization” movement? I would love to participate in any such activity.

ELIZABETH BRINDEN
Via e-mail

Jim Pinkerton replies:

I have been thinking of ways to build upon the article, and indeed, several correspondents have suggested some sort of “Christian Conference” or “Organization of Christian States.” Any such theological-political manifestation along those lines would be fine with me, although, of course, I have no power to make such a thing come into being.

What I decided to do was this: I created a group listing on Facebook entitled “Council of the West.” And I encourage you to join FB as a member, and then join “CotW.” It’s free, and, so far as I can tell, mostly wholesome.

If you go to “CotW,” you will see that it’s just me and a few friends. Any outsider might say, “Phooey! It’s just eight or so people on a site with 40 million members in a world of 6.2 billion people.” To which my reaction is: “Even the greatest journey begins with a single step.”

If you go to the discussion board feature of “CotW,” you will see, in particular a little discussion of the word “irenicon.” That is, something that brings harmony. One such irenicon was the King James version of the Bible, as I detail in that posting. Nobody knew that particular translation of the Bible, begun almost four centuries ago, would be the translation that endures as most popular, and most influential—even atheists would have to agree that the KJV is perhaps the most influential “literary” work in the English language, and most Christians, of course, revere the KJV for its solemn and stately style.

What’s the “irenicon” equivalent for today? It’s obvious to me that just as the printing press was the “killer app” of the 17th century, so today it’s the Internet.

So here’s my idea: an online irenicon. If the English language could unite and inspire vast swathes of humanity back then, then maybe now the English language, plus the Internet, could do the same in our time. I am not exactly sure what form it will take, but one idea is to figure out a way to get all 2.3 billion Christians to be part of the same “Virtual Christendom.”

Obviously, there are a zillion objections to be raised, but equally obviously, any Christian should be eager to fulfill the injunction of Paul in Ephesians: “Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

It seems to me that if everyone in Christendom could gather around a few simple precepts—designed for ecumenism, not division, and certainly not any sort of religious or political dominion—then maybe a lot of people would want to sign up, and then we would be on our way toward a “Christian Internationale.”

What would happen then? I don’t know. But I would pray that God would smile upon the undertaking.

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DAVID SMITH DRAWN & QUARTERED

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[ELECTION]

RUDY'S PEST PROBLEM

While we would prefer to ignore Norman Podhoretz, his influence in Republican frontrunner Rudy Giuliani's campaign makes that difficult. The Pod is now on a major media tour selling his book *World War IV* and is repeating certain phrases again and again.

One is "draining the swamp" of Mideast radicalism. That's not an actual policy proposal; rather, it's designed to advance a dehumanizing analogy about Arabs by likening them to insects. This age-old tactic, common on the Israeli far Right, works to weaken any reservations Americans might have about destroying Muslim societies.

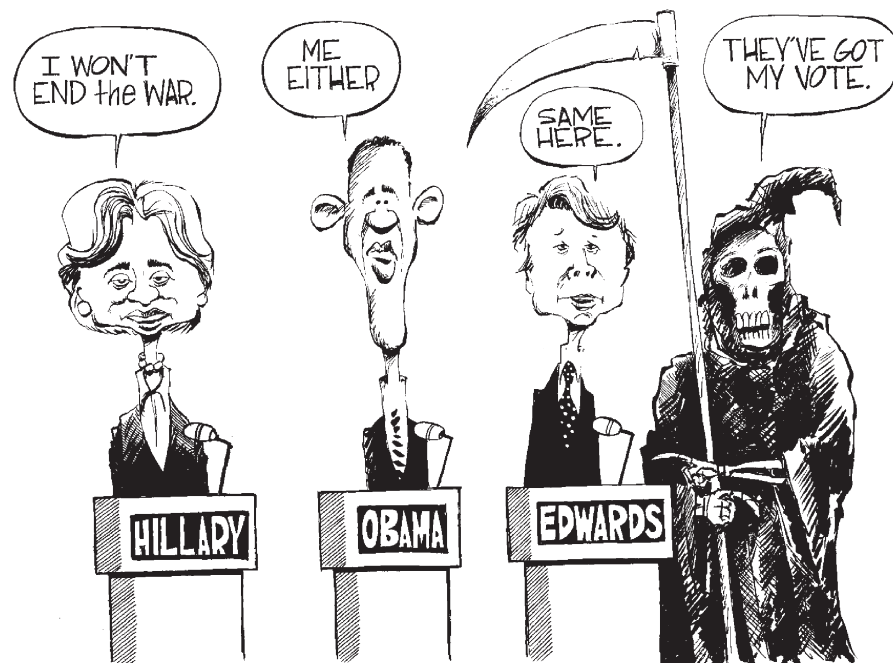
Another phrase Podhoretz uses regularly is "chump change"—a sort of hustler slang to describe the salaries of jobs not worth taking. The neocon patriarch says the mistakes we've made in Iraq are "chump change" compared to those we made in World War II, then recalls American casualties in places like Anzio. His implication is obvious: our spent blood and treasure in Iraq are minor compared to losses we've sustained before.

A question then for Rudy Giuliani: does he agree with Podhoretz that the Mideast is a pestilent place where our policy ought to be "draining the swamp"? And does he really think that soldiers killed and dollars spent in Iraq are easily dismissed as "chump change" the way his chief foreign-policy adviser does?

[JUSTICE]

HE'S NO EMMETT TILL

If contemporary issues seem complicated, why not return to a simpler time, when moral posturing and knowing the right side were so much easier? That seems to be the reasoning of the tens of thousands who converged on Jena, Louisiana last month, presenting themselves as heirs to the iconic civil-rights demonstrations of the 1960s. They have



BRITT COPLEY NEWS SERVICE

millions of admirers nationwide, and "Jena Six" has become a catchword for innocent blacks caught in a web of racist Southern law enforcement.

Of course, even in Jena, reality does not quite fit into such neat categories. The black teens who were charged with attempted murder for attacking a white student weren't quite choirboys. The previous criminal record of Mychal Bell, the Jena Six member who has received the most media attention, was the reason the local district attorney took pains to try him as an adult. Juvenile justice apparently hadn't fazed him.

Surely the initial charges leveled against Bell were too severe. Yet if you were a friend or relative of the student who was beaten and left unconscious by the Jena Six for no reason other than that he was of the same race as students who had engaged in a nasty act of symbolic racism involving nooses, you might well think "justice" would require that Bell receive more than the many wrist slaps he had incurred in his long career as a young offender.

Those who think that way—and they may well be a majority of Americans—tend to keep their thoughts to themselves. But they could well make themselves heard in the voting booth by politicians who embrace uncritically the "cause" of the Jena Six.

[WAR]

MODERATE INQUISITION

Our Armed Forces were once warriors. Mission creep has occasionally made them into peacekeepers and armed humanitarians. Now the war in Iraq is turning them into theological reformers.

The U.S. military is introducing "religious enlightenment" courses for Iraqi detainees. Muslim clerics are brought in to "teach out of a moderate doctrine" and "tear apart" the religious arguments for *jihad* advanced by al-Qaeda. Marine Maj. Gen. Douglas M. Stone says the programs are intended to "bend them back to our will."

One can only imagine how grateful the detainees are to receive religious instruction from the beneficent hands of their American jailers. After all, what could be a less radicalizing experience than having your country occupied by foreigners and spending years in a military prison—or rather, the "House of Wisdom" as the military is now calling its detention center for young insurgents?

Of course, General Stone doesn't take the results of this program on faith. He puts the students under a polygraph to determine if they've accepted a moderate Muhammad into their hearts. Stone brags that his detention facility even had "a group of moderates overtake extremists."

It's never happened before! Found them, identified them, threw them up against the fence and shaved their frickin' beards off of them. ... I mean, that is historic!" Surely the American people will sleep sounder tonight knowing that the historic beard threat has been eliminated.

[PRESIDENCY]

LOYAL OPPOSITION

After a recent meeting with the president, George Stephanopoulos reported, "He believes that whoever replaces him, like General Eisenhower when he replaced Harry Truman, may criticize his policy during the campaign but will likely continue much of it in office." Think this is more wishful thinking from the man who claimed that major combat operations in Iraq ended in May 2003? Think a Democratic successor would surely heed public opinion and end the war? Think again.

Asked if the troops would be home by 2013, Barack Obama answered, "I think it's hard to project four years from now." John Edwards: "I cannot make that commitment." Hillary Clinton: "It is very difficult to know." You can almost hear the War Party shout, "Four More Years!"

[BUDGET]

WOLFONOMICS 101

In the business world, underestimating the cost of a project by a factor of 12 wouldn't be a wise career move. But Beltway logic rewards that kind of financial wizardry with a promotion to the top job at the World Bank. Paul Wolfowitz figured that the Iraq War would cost between \$60 and \$95 billion—and that oil revenue would cover the tab.

Not quite. Congress has just approved another \$150 billion—on top of the \$602 billion already spent—for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. For those of you keeping score at home, that's three-quarters of the way to a trillion dollars. Had

that sum been hinted in advance, the president's men would have had a much harder time selling their war. Are they spectacularly bad accountants or something more sinister?

Ask Lawrence Lindsey. When the White House economics guru predicted in September 2002 that the war would cost between \$100 and \$200 billion, he was fired for his pessimism. Mitch Daniels, director of the Office of Management and Budget called Lindsey's estimate "very, very high."

Turns out it was startlingly low. We blew past Lindsey's outer limit in April 2004—and are still sinking treasure into the sand.

[SPORTS]

DIVERSITY POP UP

In June, *Sports Illustrated* featured a cover story on general manager Omar Minaya and the "Melting Pot Mets" he built. New York's National League team had a grip on first place that had lasted a season and a half, and *SI* credited Minaya's fearless multiculturalism. The magazine drooled over the social consciousness of "making sure the Mets' Latino prospects are being taught English, and their Anglo prospects are being taught Spanish." How progressive and forward-looking! And how irrelevant.

In September, Gotham's newspapers noted that the Mets, like all Major League teams these days, have a clubhouse divided by ethnicity. Unlike those teams, the Mets bullpen couldn't hold a lead, their starting pitchers couldn't throw a clean inning, and their position players couldn't turn a double play. After the greatest late-season collapse in the history of baseball, the Metropolitans are a punch line on late-night talk shows. Perhaps next season, Minaya can focus on how his team plays on the field instead of how his social engineering plays in the press. ■

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It Takes an Agenda

Conservatives cannot live by Hillary-hate alone.

By David Weigel

IT'S A BALMY, beer-drinking evening in the middle of August, and the conservatives trickling in to a meeting of the Robert A. Taft Club can't enjoy it. They're mostly under-30 Washington professionals, and they're fed up with the Republican Party. They think George W. Bush's bumbling and ideological hat-trading have reduced the conservative movement to a pitiable, piddling state. If Karl Rove stepped inside, he'd come out looking like Oscar de la Hoya after a bout gone wrong.

They settle into a debate about the future of the conservative movement and the Republican Party. Panelists take turns whipping the party for its sins. "We beat them on immigration," says Richard Viguerie, the direct-mail pioneer, "but right now, we just don't have the strength or the resources to affect public policy the way we want to." He beseeches the crowd to help save the movement, but that gets a muted reaction. So he steps it up: "I still think that in the short term, as many problems as we have right now, Hillary Clinton can bring conservatives back together."

The name does the trick: soft laughter moves around the room. Keeping Hillary out of the White House is literally the only motivation some conservatives have to pull the Republican lever in 2008, especially if their party nominates a pro-choice candidate for the first time since 1976. "Just enough people might go to the polls next November nursing one conviction that trumps all others," Terence Jeffrey wrote a few weeks after the panel (which he also appeared on). "There's no way they would vote for

Hillary Clinton." Fred Barnes, the *Weekly Standard* executive editor and a sturdy weathervane for Republican popular opinion, expressed the same thing in a late-September column: "Nearly all Republicans, plus a lot of independents, rally around the need to defeat Senator Hillary Clinton and keep her away from the presidency. So it follows, not entirely logically, that they wish for her to win the Democratic nomination."

Is this wishful thinking from a party and a movement on the ropes? Not according to pollsters. There are voters who have given up on the GOP over the last few years and utterly loathe the Clintons in general or Hillary in particular. Americans are aching to vote Democratic, and polls that test a generic Republican candidate against a generic Democrat give Clinton's party a double-digit lead. But their enthusiasm flags when they ponder the flesh-and-blood Democratic frontrunner. Pollster Scott Rasmussen points out that at least 45 percent of Americans don't like Clinton personally. She simply rubs them the wrong way—in every way. Despite that generic lead, she only ties or narrowly outpaces Rudy Giuliani, Fred Thompson, and John McCain.

"Of the top three Democratic candidates, she's absolutely the weakest in the general election," Rasmussen says. "Hillary is a unifying factor for Republicans, and Republicans aren't otherwise unified. If Hillary is the nominee, this is a competitive race."

But see if you can spot the problem. Conservatives are fraught, angry at their traditional party, unable to decide on a

standard-bearer, unsure even what they stand for. They don't think this is the year to sort those problems out. They're counting on a short-cut when the Democrats nominate an unelectable cold fish who has infuriated the Right for a decade and a half. Millions remember how they felt when she belittled other wives for "staying home and baking cookies," and Bill Clinton promised voters "two for the price of one" if they sent his family to the White House.

On the Right, the list of grievances was even longer. Both Clintons were seen as ambassadors of 1960s radicalism and cultural decadence, and Hillary was the worse of the two: a pro-choice feminist who didn't take her husband's name until pollsters told her it would help him make a political comeback.

Yet for all of that outrage, Republicans lost that election to the Clintons. And the hope that voters will see what they see and reject what the Clintons stand for resembles the plan Democrats clung to in 2004. They choose John Kerry on the theory he would be the least controversial general-election candidate, then counted on an electorate fed up with George W. Bush to deliver the election.

In the nearly three years since, Hillary has been the *de facto* Democratic candidate. The Right's efforts to attack her have fallen completely, pathetically flat. Her popularity is low, but not much lower than Bush's was in 2004. If the linchpin of a 2008 campaign is unifying Republicans in the cause of defeating Hillary, it might be enough to stitch together most of the conservative movement—but not enough to win.

Compare the efforts of 2007 to the efforts of 1999 and 2000. After First Lady Hillary Clinton started seeking a Senate seat, Republican donors practically sprained their wrists signing checks. Rudy Giuliani, a social liberal whom Republicans weren't as comfortable with then as now, raised more than \$20 million. When Giuliani left the race, Rep. Rick Lazio raised \$4.5 million in six weeks.

That wasn't the limit of the Hillary effect. The National Republican Senatorial Committee saw its donations surge when it asked supporters to banish the Clintons from Washington once and for all. By the middle of 2000, the committee raised \$20 million, twice as much as it had raised in 1998 and triple what it raised in 1996. "She's now the Republican Party's No. 1 fundraiser," said a spokesman for the National Republican Senatorial Committee to a reporter from *The Hill*.

It was a simpler time. This past July, the National Republican Senatorial Committee sent out a "quiz" to donors that warned, "Hillary Clinton is calling Senate Democrats to push a passage of measures to institute government-run health-care." Imagine, a President Hillary Clinton with a massive Senate majority to do her bidding! But appeals like that have done nothing for the NRSC: their Democratic counterparts have out-raised them by \$34.1 to \$18.1 million. The month of the quiz letter, the Democrats beat them by \$2.7 to \$2.2 million.

It's the same story in the presidential race. Since the start of the year, the nine remaining Republican candidates have raised about \$104 million. The Democrats, including Clinton, have raised \$144.3 million. When John McCain campaign manager Rick Davis sent out an 11th-hour fundraising e-mail, he played what he thought was his strongest card: "There are many reasons to support John McCain, but as we approach this quarter's fundraising deadline Saturday at midnight, let me remind you of just

one of them: John McCain is the only candidate who can defeat Hillary Clinton." That was the prelude to a weak finance report and a staff purge that completed McCain's descent to hobbled dark horse.

And those efforts have been absolute triumphs compared to the third-party anti-Hillary efforts and PACs. The first sign that conservative donors were growing less animated about the Clintons was the launch of Stop Her Now in February 2005. Republican strategist Arthur Finkelstein planned on raising \$10 million for a campaign along the lines of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, the 2004 group that raised \$27 million to attack John Kerry's Vietnam service and his homeland antiwar activism.

Finkelstein failed. The group recorded a radio ad that was never broadcast and from its founding through June 2005, reported only one \$500 donation. Over the next year, Clinton glided to her Senate re-election as the group raised only \$25,000, and she out-raised her opponent by nearly ten to one.

Stop Her Now actually survived that election after Texas philanthropist Richard Collins (a Swift Boat donor) bought it and hired a new crop of media consultants. Now the group offers a news feed that collates Hillary headlines and a series of cartoons that mock the senator as a humorless, power-mad talk-show host. Collins wants to raise about \$8 million before the end of the race—a much more modest goal than Finkelstein's \$10 million for a race in New York—but there will be no mention of family problems or sex scandals. "We want to define the radical ideas of Hillary Clinton," he says, "but not in a mean-spirited way."

What changed between 2000 and 2007? Why isn't the mention of Hillary Clinton's name the motivating factor it used to be for conservatives? Some activists argue that the GOP and the

movement are distracted. In Rudy Giuliani, there's a Republican frontrunner who defies decades of party stances on social issues and personal mores. Conservative donors are too busy sorting out the party's future to cohere and battle Hillary.

"Back in 2000 we had a plan," says Viguerie. "It was a simple plan: beat Hillary. Keep Hillary out of the Senate. And at first we had Rudy Giuliani as the focus of that, but after he dropped out, you could help out Rick Lazio. We'll get a presidential candidate, and then we'll get focused."

That might be one reason the Right can't rally against Hillary. Conservative division has led to depression, a sense that a Clinton restoration is inevitable, and that the best plan going ahead is to wait for her election and watch as, like her husband, she stumbles and seeds a GOP comeback. A mid-July CBS News poll revealed that 53 percent of Republicans thought it was very or somewhat likely that Clinton would win the presidency. Few Republicans think the party can win back Congress in 2008. Combine that with the anger that between one-third and one-quarter of the GOP base feels toward George W. Bush, and the relentless negativity starts to make sense.

"There's a big difference between 2000 and 2007," says John LeBoutillier, a former Republican congressman from New York and the head of Stop Hillary PAC. "In 2000, everyone on the Right hated Clinton and Gore, and we rallied to the guy we didn't know: Bush. It's different now. We hate Bush, and we hate the Bushes. We hate watching the Clintons palling around with the Bushes on goodwill tours and the like."

There is another reason conservatives can't count on Hillary: she offends and irritates them so deeply that they have trouble actually strategizing against her. They launch attacks, but compared to the carefully plotted Swift Boat strike on

John Kerry or the years-long effort to spotlight Al Gore's strange bragging and fibbing, the anti-Hillary attacks are erratic, grabbing early media attention and then fading out of the picture. Conservatives fixate on long-dormant scandals, like Bill Clinton's treatment of Kathleen Willey and Juanita Broaddrick, without appreciating that reporters no longer want to chase those stories and that their very mention stokes sympathy for Clinton's wife.

But it's all some anti-Hillary agitators know how to do. In July, Sean Hannity told professional Hillary slayer Dick Morris the question he wanted some intrepid hack to ask the candidate: "Do you believe the women that claim that your husband serially abused them? Juanita Broaddrick, Kathleen Willey, Paula Jones. Is that a legitimate and fair question?" Morris repeatedly shook his head and tried to explain where Hannity was going wrong: "Whenever anybody hits Hillary on her personal life, her marriage, or whether she is a lesbian or not, it plays into her hands."

Morris is right. Clinton has never been as popular as she was in 1998 and 1999, during the height of her husband's sex scandals, when voters grew to see her as a courageous wronged woman. (New York Democrats recruited Clinton to run for their open Senate seat hoping to cash in on that popularity. She didn't, as it's sometimes remembered, "parachute" into the race.) She's not completely immune from Republican attacks on her character, but she can deflect an awful lot of the damage. Most attacks on Hillary's past, her ethics, or her scandals either backfire or fall off the radar.

Why is the media so disinterested? Simple: Hillary-phobia doesn't sell like it used to. Four books about Clinton have been released from major publishers in 2007, with varying levels of fanfare. According to Nielsen Bookscan, Carl Bernstein's *A Woman in Charge*

has been a sizable hit, selling 52,000 copies on the strength of the author's fame and interviews with Clinton's late childhood friend Betsy Ebeling. (It benefited from anticipation, too: its original release date was in 2003.) But *Her Way*, a much-hyped effort by investigative reporters Jeff Gerth and Don Van Natta Jr. released the same week as Bernstein's book, has sold only 18,000 copies. Bay Buchanan's *The Extreme Makeover of Hillary (Rodham) Clinton* sold half as many. Amanda Carpenter's *The Vast Right-Wing Conspiracy's Dossier on Hillary Clinton*, helped along by a push and some free distribution at the Conservative Political Action Conference, sold 1,000 fewer copies than Buchanan's book. A little perspective: no one expected Sen. Joe Biden's autobiography to be a hit, and no one's much interested in poring through it for dirt, but it has moved 10,000 copies anyway.

There's still a market for anti-Hillary books, and if you're a publisher they're a better bet than *Ten Reasons You Can't Trust Chris Dodd* or *Mike Gravel: Unfit for Command*. But the Hillary books are, in the end, bad for conservatives. Just as she did in her Senate race, Hillary has raised millions of dollars with pearl-clutching direct mail and e-mail pleas to help her defend herself from the vast conspiracy that wants to destroy her. The *Politico*'s Ben Smith has dubbed the anti-Hillary groups a "small bunch of failed business schemes that pile up debt while Hillary herself raises money off their attacks."

So she eggs along her opponents in an ongoing, losing effort. Nothing that conservatives can do to Hillary Clinton can fix the fractures in the movement or recommit the voters who have abandoned them during the Bush era. Attacking Hillary is a short-term fix, a flawed strategy that Democrats tried only three years ago as they nominated a ticket with a muddled Iraq War position and

tried to make up the difference with \$300-million worth of third-party attacks. They never dealt with their internal crises, hoping that a campaign against Bush would be enough to win.

"I'd prefer these things be contests of ideas," says Craig Shirley, a longtime political strategist who's doing some work for Stop Her Now. "Our conservative, libertarian ideas are better than their collectivist ideas. But running on ideas, you know, that requires the people on our side to have the courage and intellect to understand what this is all about."

That would require a little bit of cool-headedness and distance, and the Republican Party doesn't have much of either at the moment. When I pressed John LeBoutillier on what the conservative movement needed to do, he fretted about the damage of the last seven years. "The Bush experience has really turned them off," he said. "We're so thrown that we don't have our heads on straight." But when I asked if his energy would be put to better use reforming the Republican Party, he hedged. Clinton had to be defeated first.

Obviously, 2008 is not going to lack for anti-Hillary campaigns. There will be more books, more speculation about scandals, more digging into financial records—a treasure hunt for some silver bullet that will finally end her career. This is exactly what the Clinton campaign is ready for, and they're in luck: the swing vote that will elect the next president is far angrier at Republicans and George W. Bush than it is at her right now. It's moved on. It wants to hear some new arguments.

The question for conservatives is whether they want to spend the next year making those arguments or whether they want to spend it spinning Hillary Clinton. ■

David Weigel is an associate editor of Reason.

Rudy Bombs in London

America's mayor poses as the heir to Churchill and Thatcher.

By Alex Massie

LAST MONTH, Rudy Giuliani traveled to London to establish his *bona fides* as an international statesman. A Downing Street chat with Prime Minister Gordon Brown was accompanied by meetings with Tony Blair and Winston Churchill's granddaughter, Celia Sandys, who claimed, implausibly, that Giuliani was "Churchill in a baseball cap."

The *piece de resistance* was Giuliani's appearance to give the inaugural Margaret Thatcher Memorial lecture at a dinner sponsored by the Atlantic Bridge think tank and attended by many of the Iron Lady's most dedicated admirers.

The rationale for the trip was simple: if Giuliani can appear as a world leader, he can create the impression that he is George W. Bush's natural, even inevitable, successor. It was an audacious gambit that a co-operative press corps was only too happy to buy. "His foreign policy pronouncements were certainly Thatcher-esque," gushed the *Washington Post's* Dan Balz. MSNBC's Joe Scarborough was even more enthusiastic, suggesting, "the picture of Rudy Giuliani, America's Mayor, in front of 10 Downing Street, sends a signal to Republican voters that this guy is ready for primetime."

If only this were true. A more rigorous analysis of Giuliani's London trip—one that looks at what the candidate actually said, rather than at how he was perceived—reveals a different reality: one characterized by confusion, intellectual incoherence, and a misreading of history so terrible one is tempted to conclude it must have been deliberate.

The speech was an opportunity for Giuliani to impress a friendly audience

with his grasp of international affairs and his appreciation of the complexity of the challenges facing the next president. It was an opportunity he flubbed. More than one eyebrow was raised when it became clear that Giuliani did not see fit to construct a proper speech, delivering a rambling talk from notes rather than a formal address.

Giuliani criticized what he termed the "failed approach of dealing with terrorism from the point of view of being careful and being cautious and treating it as a crime rather than as an act of war." He seemed not to notice, or be aware, that the lady his address was supposed to honor had taken exactly that approach. Giuliani acknowledged that the United Kingdom has, alas, more experience with terrorism than the United States, "so there's a lot we can learn from you"—which makes it all the stranger that he seemed so determined to ignore any lessons the UK might be able to provide. The scale of the threat posed by Islamist terrorism might be greater than that posed by Irish Republicanism, but it seems quixotic to praise the British experience of dealing with terrorism while refusing to absorb its lessons.

Any successful strategy needs to recognize that dealing with terrorism is much more likely to be a police action than a problem that has a military solution. The British military approach in Northern Ireland was designed to create a stalemate, convincing the IRA that neither side could win a military victory. But that could not have been achieved absent successful intelligence and police action—exactly the approach

Giuliani criticizes when it comes to what he terms "the terrorists' war on us."

To take one example: in 1981, Thatcher insisted that IRA hunger strikers were entirely responsible for their own actions and could expect no sympathy or succor from the British state. If they wished to starve themselves to death in political protest, that was their prerogative. The lady was not for turning. When Bobby Sands became the first of 10 terrorist martyrs that summer, Thatcher remained unmoved. "Mr. Sands was a convicted criminal," she told the House of Commons. "He chose to take his own life. It was a choice that his organization did not allow to many of its victims."

An admirably tough position, you may feel. Yet once the hunger strikes were over, the Thatcher government quietly acceded to some of the IRA inmates' demands. They would not have to wear prison uniforms, for instance. The government conceded that the prisoners were a different category of inmate from run-of-the-mill criminals. Rather than showing weakness, this demonstrated the strength of a flexible, layered approach.

Four years later, Thatcher ignored the furious protests of Ulster's Unionists and signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement, giving the Republic of Ireland a say for the first time in the government of Northern Ireland. Though it would be 13 years before the Good Friday Agreement was reached in Belfast, Thatcher's initiative was the first step on the long road to some sort of peace. That peace, of course, would not have been possible had the Thatcher government not implicitly accepted that Irish nationalists

had legitimate or at least understandable grievances that could, at least partially, be satisfied.

Indeed, successive British governments have appreciated the Lampedusan aphorism that things must change if things are to remain the same. This requires some dissembling: publicly, you refuse to talk to terrorists, privately you keep a back channel open for dialogue.

Giuliani preferred to ignore all this, clinging to the facile belief that rhetorical bluntness of the “we win, they lose” variety is enough. But like Ronald Reagan, Thatcher appreciated that tough talking could only carry one so far and that there were times when jaw-jaw was better than war-war. Giuliani, by contrast, promises to “turn back this tide of terror and defeat the violent forces of disorder wherever they appear.”

Giuliani continued that if only “from the beginning” (which he dated to the 1972 Munich Olympics) “we had dealt with terrorism as a serious act against civilization, as an act that was going to continue and that we couldn’t compromise with and couldn’t negotiate with and we just had to end, I don’t know we’d be in this position today.”

Well, OK, then. This leads one to the remarkable position in which any skeptical attitude towards permanent warfare is considered “appeasement.” As best one can tell, Giuliani’s map of the world is largely uncharted; no wonder much of it is labeled “Here Be Monsters.”

It’s notable, too, that Giuliani seeks to establish himself as Reagan’s heir while ruling out any “negotiation” with America’s enemies, as though talking to the Soviet Union played no part in ending the Cold War. Giuliani might pay tribute to the right conservative icons, but he seems determined to ignore any lessons they might be able to teach the U.S. about dealing with Iran.

Worse still is the incoherence of Giuliani’s own claim to foreign-policy expert-

ise. In the current issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Giuliani predicates his presidential campaign squarely upon his experiences as the mayor of New York City. He may have no other option, but alas, this merely illustrates how threadbare Hizzoner’s foreign-policy experience really is.

For Giuliani says he can solve the world’s problems by adopting the same policies he pursued as mayor of New York City. In other words, policing the world is just the same as clearing hookers and panhandlers out of Times Square. The message is: if you can make it there, you can make it anywhere. If you were in a charitable frame of mind, you might call this a simplistic approach.

Giuliani seems to believe that a souped-up NYPD is all that is required to guarantee the United States’ security. How else can one interpret this passage from the *Foreign Affairs* article?

I know from personal experience that when security is reliably established in a troubled part of a city, normal life rapidly reestablishes itself: shops open, people move back in, children start playing ball on the sidewalks again, and soon a decent and law-abiding community returns to life. The same is true in world affairs. Disorder in the world’s bad neighborhoods tends to spread. Tolerating bad behavior breeds more bad behavior. But concerted action to uphold international standards will help peoples, economies, and states to thrive. Civil society can triumph over chaos if it is backed by determined action.

That would seem to be a prescription for war without end.

British conservatives were prepared to be impressed by Giuliani. A poll conducted by conservativehome.com found that he had the support of 43 percent of British Tories. But more striking was that Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama

won the support of one in five British conservatives.

That should not be so surprising. There is little appetite in Britain for fresh adventures overseas. The more likely Rudy Giuliani is to become the Republican nominee, the more wary British conservatives will be. Tory leader David Cameron declined to say if he would have voted for George W. Bush in 2004, and you might expect similar reserve from British Tories next year, too. Heads were turned, for instance, when Giuliani suggested expanding NATO membership to Singapore and Israel. Unfortunately for the mayor, heads were turned because British Tories were thinking, “Is he mad?” not “What a capital idea.”

No wonder that after eight years of Bushian recklessness some Tory minds are wondering if the known quantity of Hillary Clinton might be more palatable than the unknown risks of a Giuliani presidency. As Simon Evans, Tory MP for Chelmsford, wrote recently, “To ignore Hillary Clinton in the hope that she will go away and cling to a dubious prejudice of supporting a discredited Republican Party which is on the electoral skids would be the height of folly for the Conservative Party.”

If nothing else serves to concentrate minds, Giuliani’s striking claim in London that he is one of the “four or five” most famous Americans in the world suggests a case of megalomania severe even by the standards of presidential candidates. In a more rational era, this alone might suffice to disqualify Giuliani from the race.

As it is, his trip to pay homage to the Special Relationship and cozy up to Mrs. Thatcher was revealing—just not in quite the way Giuliani had hoped. ■

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Malaise on the Right

The *New York Times* report that social conservatives are talking of bolting to a third-party candidate, should Rudy Giuliani get the GOP nomination, is another sign

of the disintegrating Reagan coalition.

In truth, that coalition—the 49 states and 60 percent of the nation Reagan won in 1984—was but a Xerox copy of Nixon's New Majority of 1972. A decade before Reagan won the presidency, Kevin Phillips had already published *The Emerging Republican Majority*.

To understand why the Republican coalition is disintegrating, one must understand what held it together.

To create a GOP majority in the 1960s, as Nixon did, one had first to identify the voting blocs of the FDR-New Deal coalition the GOP could capture. You go hunting where the ducks are, said Barry Goldwater, though Barry proved not all that good a hunter.

Rockefeller Republicans felt the way to go was to appeal to the trendy media, create little Great Societies at the state level, become more boldly progressive than Democrats on social issues.

Nixon saw that the Democrats who were easiest to win were the non-glamorous working-class types who belonged to unions and backed tough-cop Frank Rizzo in Philly, Mayor Richard J. Daley in Illinois, and Strom Thurmond and George Wallace in Dixie.

Savaged for crafting a "Southern strategy" rooted in race, Nixon had a national strategy, even as he doubled Goldwater's vote among African-Americans and trebled it in the South. But it was the white vote, 15 times as large as the black vote, that mattered. Nixon carried 67 percent of it. Reagan would carry 64 percent. No matter the Democratic lock on the minority vote, as long

as the GOP carried these percentages of the majority vote, Democrats were frozen out of the White House.

Nixon and Reagan brought their Democrats into camp on social and security issues. First was anti-Communism and opposition to the antiwar movement tearing Democrats apart. Second was law-and-order, which meant standing up to urban rioters and campus radicals. Third was social conservatism, defending traditional values in the moral and cultural revolution of the 1960s.

On civil rights, the Nixon position was desegregation, yes, social engineering, no. Nixon integrated the Southern schools that had been 90 percent segregated when LBJ went home. While opposing busing for racial balance, Nixon grudgingly obeyed the court orders.

He promised to nominate Supreme Court justices who would be "strict constructionists," polar opposite of liberal judicial activists Earl Warren and "Wild Bill" Douglas.

"I should like to have it said of my first Administration that in it the forces of selfishness and of lust for power met their match. I should like to have it said of my second Administration that in it these forces met their master," railed FDR in his Second Inaugural.

Nixon rallied the New Majority by selecting different targets—liberal media, urban rioters, and student radicals—and stuffing them into the old FDR kill box for round-the-clock bombing.

What is breaking up the Nixon-Reagan coalition?

First, success. With the end of the

Cold War, the cause of the Right, anti-Communism, had triumphed. "We are going to do the worst thing we can do to you," Soviet propagandist Georgi Arbatov said, "We are going to take away your enemy from you." They did. Without an "evil empire" to fight, the conservative consensus crumbled.

A second cause was shrinkage of the Republican majority as a share of the population because of mass immigration. European-Americans were 88 percent of the nation in 1965. Today the figure is 66 percent. Hispanics are a rising share of the vote in California and the West, and, as they are poorer and less educated, they vote for the party of government, not the party that will cut taxes on capital gains and estates they do not have.

A third cause of GOP malaise is that the social revolution of the '60s has converted a vast slice of the nation. Where Nixon carried California five times on national tickets and Reagan all four times he ran, Democrats have won it handily in the four elections since 1992.

Just as Bill Clinton, in losing both Houses in 1994, presided over the last stages of realignment begun by Nixon and Reagan, George W. Bush is presiding over the death of the Nixon-Reagan coalition.

What killed it is *Wall Street Journal* conservatism: a disastrous and unnecessary war; a preferential option for the rich; open-borders immigration; a free-trade fanaticism that is denuding America of manufacturing jobs, sinking the dollar, and growing our dependence on foreign goods and foreign loans.

Now the GOP frontrunner is a New York mayor who is pro-choice, pro-gun control, pro-affirmative action, marches proudly in Gay Pride parades, and presided over a sanctuary city for illegal aliens. And the Right let it happen. ■

Morningside in America

Don't bother us with war; we're protesting homophobia.

By Michael Brendan Dougherty

NEW YORK, N.Y.—“It's him!” shouted one pedestrian, pointing at the video screens in the FoxNews truck, “The Iranian dude!”

That dude was Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the president of Iran, the subject of screaming headlines in New York's tabloids (“The Evil Has Landed!”), and the man at the center of a heated national debate about free speech, campus politics, and U.S. foreign policy.

A dozen New Yorkers, locked out of Columbia's normally open campus, were lined up along the side of the truck. Hoping to hear Ahmadinejad say something provocative, or crazy, something against Bush, or something that might start another war, they leaned in to listen.

“The reality of purity of spirit and good behavior, knowledge and wisdom is pure and clear reality,” said the diminutive head of the Islamic Republic.

“Booor-ing!” sang a short blond man as he exited the scrum. A producer echoed his judgment: “No one's going to watch this. It's like reading the Unabomber letters.” New York is a tough crowd.

But before Fox cut away, Ahmadinejad cast himself as a defender of Palestinians against “60 years of conflict and terror” (some applause) and European scholars with “different perspectives” on the Holocaust (silence). Soon he would announce, “In Iran, we don't have homosexuals like in your country. ... I don't know who's told you that we have it” (laughter). The broadcast was saved!

Outside the locked-down campus, protestors lifted up signs: “Hitler Lives”

with a cartoon of Ahmadinejad's limbs forming a swastika. The student body of Rambam Mesivta yeshiva, bussed in for the occasion, carried posters saying “Ahmadinejad is Not Welcome” or demanding that the U.S. “Stop Iran from Going Nuclear.” Pro-war conservative Michelle Malkin stood with a group that included rabbis, Iranian Americans, and a few teenagers wearing right-wing t-shirts, all warning the pedestrians about the evil in their midst.

After the speech, members of Columbia's Hillel chapter gathered outside the auditorium and organized themselves to give quotes to the dozens of media members, some in fluent Spanish. One told me that she had no problem with Ahmadinejad speaking in America, “but I don't have to welcome him into my own home. Columbia is my home.” The Jewish campus group wore black t-shirts that read, “All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.” Edmund Burke rarely gets this much love at Columbia.

Inside the campus, a carnival of political speech organized by the Columbia Coalition picked up. Noah Baron, a freshman member of SDS, approached a podium for student speakers on the stairs facing the quad. “Ahmadinejad's rise is a backlash against our policies, for our support for Iran's previous regime, and for our war in Iraq,” he said to healthy applause. With his plea to “keep faith with Iraqi civilians and American soldiers” and his button-down shirt, he perfectly played the role of a firm but non-fanatical man of the Left.

In the center of the square, a more ragged and radical group of A.N.S.W.E.R. members held up a banner declaring “Ahmadinejad=Bad, Bush=Worse.” A young woman in a ripped orange t-shirt screamed herself hoarse: “Which country is neck deep in the blood of Iraqis?” The firebrand implored, “Refuse to choose between McWorld and *jihad*,” before demanding the overthrow of the U.S. government.

Columbia's radical reputation goes back to 1968 when students occupied Hamilton Hall and four other buildings for a week after smashing a wall around the gym. The students went on strike and demanded that Columbia be democratized. They were eventually arrested, but many went on to riot at the Democratic Convention that year, and some helped form the Weather Underground.

While nothing in the university's history has since measured up to that disturbance, Columbia remains a redoubt of young leftists. Last year, when the founder of the Minutemen, Jim Gilchrist, spoke at the invitation of Columbia's College Republicans, students rushed the stage, chased him away and unfurled a banner that read, “No one is ever illegal” in English and Arabic.

The treatment students gave Gilchrist was grist for the conservative media mill in the days leading up to Ahmadinejad's appearance. columnist David Limbaugh fumed, “liberal academia's simulated love affair with the First Amendment and so-called tolerance for diverse viewpoints just goes one way.”

But on the steps of the administration building, one grungy revolutionary thought the offense went the other way, that the administration was appeasing the right wing. He denounced Columbia President Lee Bollinger's decision to publicly challenge the president of Iran, "Where was the promise of forceful criticism of Jim Gilchrist?" His conclusion that the administration was bent on "privileging Zionist priorities over those of Columbia's Latino community" was met with boos and cheers. But to prove he's no stooge of foreign dictators, he stated, "We at Columbia oppose the disgusting sexism and homophobia in Iran." Do they ever.

The campus walls and sidewalks were littered with signs deploring Iran's "official homophobia" and pictures depicting two teenage men hung for their sex crimes. Not one among dozens of student groups and individuals who demonstrated on the administration building steps failed to emphasize their solidarity with Iran's homosexuals. Columbia's panoply of activists, social democrats, Marxists, peaceniks, and defenders of Israel all agreed. Members of the Queer Alliance, read a statement, "President Ahmadinejad's presence on campus has provided an impetus for us all to examine a number of issues, but most relevant to our concerns are the complexities of how sexual identity is constructed and understood in different parts of the world."

Asked to characterize Columbia's political culture, SDS's Baron said that while issues surrounding Israel and Palestine caused the most disagreement, support for homosexual rights "really united the campus. ... I was happy to see even members of Hillel holding up a sign that said 'Misogynist, Racist, Homophobe get off our campus.'"

The world outside the campus brushed aside Ahmadinejad's odd remarks about homosexuals with a dismissive laugh and turned to issues that affect millions, debating the impact of Iran's nuclear-

weapons development and whether the United States should respond to alleged Iranian interference in the Iraq War by bombing Tehran. But Columbia's left-wing students had actually managed to push questions of war and peace into the background. As long as they could speak up for homosexuals, they wouldn't have to shout at each other.

Ben Berger, a freshman who wore an Israeli flag over his back like a cape, confessed he was "a little disappointed." Looking up at the procession of student speakers he said, "I expected some chanting and marching, something more heated. I guess that's just my perception of '60s Columbia."

That era of riotous dissent is over. Columbia is a safe place now. Even as

the Iraq War becomes more unpopular than Vietnam ever was and a drumbeat for war with Iran beats in the distance, the students satisfy themselves by shadow-boxing with "homophobes" 10,000 miles away. Vigorous political disagreement is quickly expelled, as in the case of Gilchrist, or drowned out by a flood of sentimentality.

Richard W. Bulliet, the professor of Middle East history who helped arrange Ahmadinejad's visit, called it "the most dramatic 'foreign bad guy on campus' event since '59" when Castro spoke at Harvard. In reality, it was a spectacular stage on which the Iranian president, the conservative media, and the Columbia student body struck self-righteous poses. Booor-ing! ■

Bipolar Disorder

In Britain, the two parties have converged into one self-interested class.

By Neil Clark

OXFORD—In a classic episode of the 1970s comedy series "Fawlty Towers," hotelier Basil Fawlty has to hastily improvise a menu for his guests, as the only meat on the premises is duck.

Colonel Hall: Duck with orange; duck with cherries; duck surprise.

Mrs. Hall: What's duck surprise?

Basil Fawlty: Er ... that's duck without oranges or cherries.

Colonel Hall: I mean is this all there is—duck?

Basil Fawlty: Yes, done, of course, in three extremely different ways.

Colonel Hall: And what do you do if

you don't like duck?

Basil Fawlty: Well, if you don't like duck, you're rather stuck.

Fast forward 30 years, and the choice on offer for the British electorate has become as limited as the one Colonel and Mrs. Hall faced at John Cleese's notorious hotel.

Britain's two main parties—the only two who, thanks to our first-past-the-post electoral system, have a realistic chance of winning a general election—have converged to such an extent that their policies on the major issues of the day are virtually indistinguishable.

On the economy, both parties enthusiastically endorse the globalist neoliberal model, which is mistakenly described as “free market,” though it requires massive state support. Britain’s privatized railways, for instance, receive four times more in taxpayers’ subsidy than they did when they were publicly owned; it was for that very reason that the genuinely free-market Conservative transport minister Nicholas Ridley opposed privatization in the 1980s.

The Conservative’s Private Finance Initiative scheme, whereby the government pays private companies to build new hospitals and schools and then leases them from those companies under lengthy contracts, has been extended under Labour, even though once again, the taxpayer ends up paying far more in the long run.

Regarding the level of tax and spending, there is not even the width of a cigarette paper between the parties. In the same way that the incoming Labour Chancellor Gordon Brown vowed to stick to the outgoing Conservative government’s spending plans when coming to office in 1997, so Conservative Party spokesman George Osborne has promised to adhere to Gordon Brown’s plan of increasing public spending by 2 percent in real terms over the next three years if his party wins the next election. And although the Conservatives have recently announced that they will raise the threshold for the inheritance tax, there will be no overall reduction in the tax burden if the party comes to power.

Both parties rejoice in the fact that Britain is one of the most “open” economies in the world. In the last ten years, a succession of industries and flagship companies have passed into foreign ownership. Even our airports are foreign-owned, and the stock market probably won’t be long in joining them. While other European countries have main-

tained a level of national ownership in key sectors of their economies, Britain, following neoliberal orthodoxy to the book, has allowed the family silver to be flogged to whoever comes along.

The parties are equally blasé about the spiraling wealth gap. “New Labour is intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich,” said the party’s ideologist Peter Mandelson in 1998, and after 10 years of Labour governance, the gap between Britain’s rich and poor is at its highest level for more than 40 years.

On social issues, both parties promote a politically correct, “modernizing” agenda. The Conservatives still like to present themselves as the party of “the family,” yet their leader, David Cameron, has refused to endorse plans to restore the married couple’s tax allowance, which was abolished by Labour in 2000. Britain, which boasts the highest number of children born out of wedlock in Europe, now stands alone in the continent in having no recognition of marriage in its tax and benefits system. Cameron, eager to

bigot, unhinged fruitcake, extreme nationalist or closet Nazi.”

The two-party consensus on social issues is often called “liberal,” though it is anything but, as those who voice alternative views to the “dominant ideology” soon find out. Author Lynette Burrows received a warning from the police after suggesting on a BBC radio program that homosexuals did not make ideal adoptive parents, while in Lancashire, a Christian couple received a visit from the police after complaining about their council’s gay-rights policies.

On foreign policy, both parties continue to sing—with gusto—from the same pro-war, pro-intervention hymn sheet, words and music courtesy of the late Scoop Jackson. Thought Tony Blair was a hawk on Iraq? Then you should have met his opposite number, Iain Duncan Smith, who wanted Saddam toppled in the first Gulf War of 1991. IDS’s idea of “opposing” Blair on Iraq was to criticize him for waiting too long to attack. Five years on, the Tories, like Labour, are still in the grip of warmongers.

ON FOREIGN POLICY, BOTH PARTIES CONTINUE TO SING—WITH GUSTO—from THE SAME PRO-WAR, PRO-INTERVENTION HYMN SHEET. WORDS AND MUSIC COURTESY OF THE LATE SCOOP JACKSON.

show his “modernizing” credentials, also backed the government in opposing the exemption of Catholic adoption agencies from the laws giving homosexual couples equal rights to adopt children. “Political, social and moral conservatism, a spurned alternative, has been excised from the programmes of all major parties,” observes commentator Peter Hitchens. “A dominant and intolerant ideology smears anyone who approaches this position as a hopeless nostalgist, obsessed with recovering a non-existent ‘golden age’ or as a racial

The leadership campaign of David Cameron was masterminded by the neo-conservative trio of MPs Osborne, Michael Gove, and Ed Vaizey, and while Cameron and his front-bench team have criticized strategy in Iraq, the party still says the invasion was justified and is firmly opposed to British withdrawal. And Cameron, like Foreign Secretary David Miliband, refuses to rule out a pre-emptive strike on Iran.

On the issue of rising violent crime, both parties propose similar non-remedies. Platitudes on the need to “crack

down” on crime are common, and while both the government and opposition express their willingness to “listen to the people,” the reintroduction of capital punishment, backed by a majority of the electorate, is deemed to be outside the parameters of acceptable solutions, as is the banning of gratuitously violent films and video games and the issuing of tougher guidelines to television program makers.

Given the way the parties have converged on almost everything from the undesirability of grammar schools to the necessity of banning the standby button on electrical appliances, it is hardly surprising that some commentators now believe the old party distinctions to be irrelevant. “The most important division in Britain is no longer Tory versus Labour. The real division is between a narrow, self-serving, and increasingly corrupt political class and the mass of ordinary voters,” opines Peter Osborne, author of *The Triumph of the Political Class*.

The best that can be said about Tony Blair is that at least he kept up the pretence of Labour and the Conservatives being separate parties. His successor, Gordon Brown, is taking the convergence process one stage further by actually inviting Conservatives—and Liberal Democrats—into his government. Brown claims he is constructing “a government of all the talents.” But the repercussions for democracy are dire. John Bercow and Patrick Mercer were elected as Conservative MPs, with the responsibility of opposing the government. What do their constituents feel now, after the duo have been appointed government advisers?

Things were all rather different a quarter of a century ago. In the 1983 election, Labour, led by the veteran peace campaigner Michael Foot, fought an election on an unapologetically left-wing program of public ownership, unilateral nuclear disarmament, and tax

hikes for the rich. The Tories, under Margaret Thatcher vowed to cut taxes, roll back the state, and increase spending on defense. Say what you like about Foot and Thatcher, but they certainly provided the electorate with a choice.

In those days, party conferences were exhilarating events where policies were actually debated. Today, the conferences resemble Soviet rallies of the late 1930s, where the robotic party faithful lavish praise on The Supreme Leader. The Stalinist party machinery works tirelessly to ensure that all new parliamentary candidates conform to the

the ex-Conservative Minister and former Old Left Lord Tebbit speak of the “considerable regard” he has for the new Labour prime minister.

Of course, there’s nothing inherently wrong with consensus politics, if the consensus genuinely represents the view of the majority. But as the *Guardian*’s Seumas Milne has observed, what is described as the “centre ground” today in fact reflects not the dominant views of the people but of the political, media, and corporate establishment. What percentage of the public support a neoconservative foreign policy? How

OF COURSE, THERE’S **NOTHING INHERENTLY WRONG** WITH CONSENSUS POLITICS, IF THE CONSENSUS GENUINELY REPRESENTS THE **VIEW OF THE MAJORITY**.

“dominant orthodoxy.” Maverick MPs with minds of their own, like the veteran Old Labour MP Bob Wareing, who combines a principled opposition to illegal wars of aggression with a conservative line on social issues, are not what one-party Britain requires: Wareing has recently been deselected in favor of a New Labor cipher.

How has it all come to this? Labour’s 18-year period in the wilderness, from 1979-97, led it to jettison just about everything it ever believed in. But it would be wrong to see the eclipse of the Old Left in British politics as a sign that the Old Right has prevailed. Thatcherism was never really a conservative ideology: it always owed more to 19th-century liberalism than it did to the ideas of Russell Kirk. The radical economic policies the Iron Lady unleashed only helped fuel social libertinism: her legacy is a Labour Party that no longer represents labor and a Conservative Party that is not in the slightest bit conservative. In today’s one-party Britain, it’s no surprise to see Gordon Brown warmly welcome the Iron Lady to tea at Number 10 or to hear

many people believe that allowing “market forces” to govern every aspect of our lives represents the best way to order our society?

Today’s cozy cross-party consensus in fact has very little public support. The increasing alienation with mainstream politics is reflected by the dramatic fall in voter turnout—in the last two general elections, only around 60 percent of the electorate bothered to vote compared to 84 percent in 1951.

For the millions in Britain who are moderate social conservatives, who are sick and tired of our country being embroiled in military conflicts that are none of our business, and who would like to see the needs of people put above the profits of Goldman Sachs, the sad truth is that there is simply no one to vote for.

In the Britain of 2007, if you don’t like duck, you really are stuck. ■

Neil Clark is a UK-based writer and journalist and regular contributor to the The Guardian and The Australian, among other publications.

Phantoms Over Syria

Everything Israel wants you to know about its secret airstrike

By Philip Giraldi

ON SEPT. 6, Israeli F-15s and F-16s attacked a site near Dayr az-Zawr in northern Syria, though the strike wasn't confirmed for nearly two weeks. The *Washington Post* reported on Sept. 13 that according to a former Israeli official, "it was an attack against a facility capable of making unconventional weapons." Two days later, Syria had an accomplice: "Israel had recently provided the United States with evidence—known by the code name 'Orchard,'" the *Post* reported, "that North Korea has been cooperating with Syria on a nuclear facility."

Beyond that, details are sketchy—perhaps deliberately so. On Sept. 19, former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu acknowledged the attack, but said it was "too early to discuss this subject." Pressed at a White House news conference the following day, President Bush twice refused to comment—though he did warn North Korea about selling nuclear weapons or expertise.

American intelligence has been unable to confirm the existence of any Syrian nuclear program, and the *Post* admitted, "[M]any outside nuclear experts have expressed skepticism that Syria, which has mostly focused on chemical and biological weapons, would be conducting nuclear trade with North Korea." But facts may not be prime property in this situation.

In the intelligence community, a disinformation operation is a calculated attempt to convince an audience that falsehoods about an adversary are true, either to discredit him or, in an extreme

case, to justify military action. When such a campaign is properly conducted, information is leaked to numerous outlets over a period of time, creating the impression of a media consensus that the story is true, as each new report validates earlier ones.

We've been here before: the leaking of unreliable information to *New York Times* reporter Judith Miller was just one example of disinformation used to make the case for the invasion of Iraq. More recently, Iran has been on the receiving end of what appears to be an officially orchestrated but poorly executed disinformation campaign regarding its involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. Now a new operation—brought to us by the old players—may be unfolding.

A chronology of the case against Syria is revealing, and the role of former UN ambassador and leading neoconservative John Bolton is key. Bolton, now at the American Enterprise Institute, has repeatedly clashed with the intelligence community over the issue of Syrian intentions, most notably in 2002 and 2003 when he was undersecretary of state for arms control. At one point, Bolton was forced to strike from a speech language suggesting that Syria had a nuclear program. On another occasion, Bolton's judgments on Syria were challenged by Robert Hutchings, director of the National Intelligence Council, who charged that Bolton "took isolated facts and made much more of them ... cherry picking ... to present the starkest possible case."

On Aug. 31, one week before the Israeli attack on Syria, Bolton wrote an op-ed for the *Wall Street Journal* that concluded, "We know that both Iran and Syria have long cooperated with North Korea on ballistic-missile programs, and the prospect of cooperation on nuclear matters is not far-fetched. Whether and to what extent Iran, Syria or others might be 'safe havens' for North Korea's nuclear-weapons development, or may have already benefited from it, must be made clear." Perhaps this was just good timing. Perhaps it was something more—possibly representing information provided by Bolton's excellent contacts within the Israeli government.

Comments made by a State Department official on Sept. 14, in the wake of the Israeli attack, bolstered the neoconservative argument that Syria is a serious threat. Andrew Semmel, acting deputy assistant secretary of state for nuclear non-proliferation policy, stated that Syria was on the U.S. nuclear "watch list" and that Damascus "might have" a number of "secret suppliers" from which to obtain nuclear equipment as part of a covert program.

Across the Atlantic, on Sept. 16, the Murdoch-owned *Sunday Times* of London published an extremely detailed story on the attack that clearly derived from Israeli sources. The piece unambiguously portrayed the bombing as "a successful Israeli raid on nuclear material supplied by North Korea." A Sept. 23 follow-up claimed that before the site was bombed, an Israeli commando unit had seized nuclear material, which had

been tested and confirmed to be of North Korean origin. A second story headlined “Snatched: Israeli commandos ‘nuclear’ raid” also appearing in the *Times* on the same day, under the same byline, provided additional details, noting that Syria, Iran, and North Korea now constitute a new “axis of evil.” It also quoted David Schenker, of the neocon Washington Institute for Near East Policy, who described Syria as a “client” of Iran.

On Sept. 18, Bolton resurfaced, telling an Israeli journalist that the United States would stand behind any preemptive attack by Tel Aviv on neighboring countries believed to have nuclear-weapons programs. The *Wall Street Journal* added a piece by editorial board member Bret Stephens asserting that the bombing in Syria was a reprise of the 1981 Israeli attack on Iraq’s Osirak nuclear reactor.

By Sept. 21, the *Washington Post* also appeared to be convinced by the story, featuring a front-page headline “Israel, US Shared Data on Suspected Nuclear Site.” The article stated that Israel provided intelligence to President Bush during the summer indicating that North Korean nuclear experts were in Syria. Bush was reportedly “troubled” by the information. The *Post* added, citing anonymous sources, that “the United States is believed to have provided Israel with some corroboration of the original intelligence before Israel proceeded with the raid,” but then, farther down in the article, the *Post* conceded, “The quality of the Israeli intelligence, the extent of North Korean assistance and the seriousness of the Syrian effort are uncertain...” To give the story even greater resonance, leading neoconservative Charles Krauthammer, in his column in the same issue, accepted as fact that Damascus was pursuing nuclear capability and warned that Israel will not accept a “nuclear Syria.”

In the days that followed, the *New York Times* offered a more measured headline: “Israeli Raid on Syria Fuels Debate on Weapons” and referred to allegations about Syria’s weapons program as “Israel’s private claims,” noting, “American officials have been extremely cautious about endorsing the Israeli conclusion.” Other outlets also picked up the story, but even those that were careful left the impression that Syria was seeking to obtain nuclear weapons, and North Korea was suspected of having supplied materials.

The pieces have a common thread: they rely entirely on information provided by Israeli sources without independent corroboration. And the ongoing play they are getting in the international media, without much critical commentary and without direct attribution to Israel, mark them as classic disinformation.

A review of the sources for the various stories and the descriptions of them reveals a great deal of ambiguity in the claims being made. The frequently cited Andrew Semmel’s apparently damning comments are laced with expressions like “possible,” “may have,” and “may have been.” What Semmel is actually saying is that nearly all of the information he has comes from Israel and cannot be verified. The conveniently anonymous sources who claim to the *Washington Post* that the U.S. is “believed” to have provided corroboration for Israeli intelligence are clearly unable to state whether it did or didn’t, rendering the comment little more than opinion. The *Post* editor who crafted the headline asserting that there was a “sharing” of information was disturbingly clueless or deliberately misleading as there was no evidence produced in the article or elsewhere to indicate that any American intelligence agency could confirm the Israeli allegations. Any “sharing” went only in one direction: from Israel to Washington.

Also lost in the shuffle is the fact that Syria has vehemently denied having any nuclear-weapons program, and North Korea isn’t known to have ever exported nuclear technology or material. The prevailing consensus is that Syria does not have an economic or technical base that would enable it to develop a nuclear weapon even if someone handed it the fissile material. The feverish imagination of John Bolton aside, even Syria’s enemies concede that there has been no evidence of nuclear-weapons development. It has but a small Chinese-built research reactor that, by one account, is less capable than those in use at a number of American universities.

There are other reasons that depicting Damascus as the latest nuclear aspirant is suspect. Destroying a weapons facility would scatter traces of radioactive material that could be detected, especially since the attack took place close to the Turkish border. No such evidence has been reported. Also notable is the absence of solid intelligence. If Israel knows conclusively that Syria has a nuclear program, surely it would have made its case in the wake of the Sept. 6 raid. Far from doing so, Tel Aviv has kept a security lid on the incident, suggesting that it would prefer to promote the story of a military success against Damascus without being too specific about the details.

Even the Bush White House, generally willing to use any hint of malfeasance to condemn Damascus and Tehran, has been reluctant to confirm the story. It doesn’t need to. Official silence—narrated by a compliant press taking uncorroborated dictation—is cementing a public impression. That’s the way disinformation works. Done right, no one stops to ask where it came from—or who benefits. ■

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The Mystery of Minot

Loose nukes and a cluster of dead airmen raise troubling questions.

By Dave Lindorff

THE UNAUTHORIZED Aug. 29 cross-country flight of a B-52H Stratofortress armed with six nuclear-tipped AGM-29 Advanced Cruise missiles, which saw these 150-kiloton warheads go missing for 36 hours, has all the elements of two Hollywood movies. One would be a thriller about the theft from an armed-weapons bunker of six nukes for some dark and murky purpose. The lead might be played by Matt Damon. The other movie would be a slapstick comedy about a bunch of bozos who couldn't tell the difference between a nuclear weapon and a pile of dummy warheads. The lead might be played by Adam Sandler, backed by the cast of "Police Academy III."

So far, the Pentagon, which has launched two separate investigations into the incident, seems to be assuming that it is dealing with the comedy version, saying that some incredible "mistake" led to nuclear weapons being taken inadvertently from a weapons-storage bunker, loaded into launch position on a bomber, and flown from North Dakota to Louisiana.

TAC has discovered that to date, more than a month after the incident, Pentagon investigators have completely ignored a peculiar cluster of six deaths, during the weeks immediately preceding and following the flight, of personnel at the two Air Force bases involved in the incident and Air Force Commando Operations headquarters.

The operative assumption of the investigations appears to be that an Air Force decision to store nuclear, conventional, and dummy warheads in the same

bunker and one mistake by weapons handlers initiated a chain of errors and oversights that led to the flight.

On Sept. 23, the *Washington Post*, in a story based upon interviews with military officials, many of them unidentified, suggested that the first known case of nuclear warheads leaving a weapons-storage area improperly was the result of two mistakes. The first, the article suggested, was a decision by the Air Force to permit the storing of nuclear weapons in the same highly secure and constantly guarded sod-covered bunkers—known as "igloos"—as non-nuclear weapons and dummy warheads. The second was some as yet unidentified mistake by weapons handlers at Minot to mount six nuclear warheads onto six of 12 Advanced Cruise Missiles that had been slated to be flown to Barksdale AFB for destruction. Those missiles and the six others, part of a group of 400 such missiles slated for retirement and disassembly, should have been fitted with dummy warheads also. The *Post* article quotes military sources as saying that once the mistake was made, a cascade of errors followed as weapons handlers, ground crews, and the B-52 crew skipped all nuclear protocols, assuming they were dealing with dummy warheads.

The problem with this theory is that dummy warheads don't look the same as the real thing. The real warheads, called W80-1's, are shiny silver, which is clearly visible through postage-stamp-sized windows on the nosecone covers that protect them on the missiles. In

addition, the mounted warheads are encased in a red covering as a second precaution.

Apparently the nukes (which can be set to explode at between 5 kilotons and 150 kilotons) were easily spotted by a Barksdale AFB ground crew when they went out to the plane on the tarmac hours after it landed. If the Barksdale ground crew, which had no reason to suspect it was looking at nuclear-tipped missiles, easily spotted the "error," why did everyone at Minot miss it, as claimed?

Clearly, whoever loaded the six nukes on one B-52 wing pod, and whoever mounted that pod on the wing, knew or should have known that they were dealing with nukes—and absent an order from the highest authority in Washington, loading such nukes on a bomber was against all policy. The odds of randomly putting six nukes all on one pod, and six dummies on the other, are 1:924. And how curious that the pilot, who is supposed to check all 12 missiles before flying, checked only the pod containing the dummy warheads.

Various experts familiar with nuclear-weapons-handling protocols express astonishment at what happened on Aug. 29 and 30. After all, over the course of more than six decades, the protocols for handling nuclear arms have called for at least two people at every step, with paper trails, bar codes, and real-time computer tracking of every warhead in the arsenal. Nothing like this has been known to have happened before. Air Force Gen. Eugene Habiger, who served

as U.S. Strategic Command chief from 1996 to 1998, told the *Post*, "I have been in the nuclear business since 1966 and am not aware of any incident more disturbing."

Philip Coyle, a senior advisor at the Center for Defense Information who served as assistant secretary of defense in the Clinton administration, calls the incident "astonishing" and "unbelievable." He says, "This wasn't just a mistake. I've counted, and at least 20 things had to have gone wrong for this to have occurred."

Bruce Blair, a former Air Force nuclear launch officer who is now president of the World Security Institute, says that the explanation of the incident as laid out in the *Washington Post*, and in the limited statements from the Air Force and Department of Defense, which call it a "mistake," are "incomplete." He notes that no mention has been made as to whether the nukes in question, which had been pre-mounted on a pylon for attachment to the B-52 wing, had their PAL (permission action link) codes unlocked to make them operational or whether a system on board the plane that would ordinarily prevent an unauthorized launch had been activated. "For all we know, these missiles could have been fully operational," he says.

The Air Force and Department of Defense are refusing to answer any questions about such matters.

Meanwhile, there are those six deaths. On July 20, 1st Lt. Weston Kissel, a 28-year-old B-52 pilot from Minot, died in a motorcycle accident while on home leave in Tennessee.

Another Minot B-52 pilot, 20-year-old Adam Barrs, died on July 5 in Minot when a car he was riding in, driven by another Minot airman, Stephen Garrett, went off the road, hit a tree, and caught fire. Airman Garrett was brought to the hospital in critical condition and has since

been charged with negligent homicide.

Two more Air Force personnel, Senior Airman Clint Huff, 29, of Barksdale AFB, and his wife Linda died on Sept. 15 in nearby Shreveport, Louisiana, when Huff reportedly attempted to pass a van in a no-passing zone on his motorcycle, and the van made a left-hand turn, striking them.

Then there are two reported suicides, which both occurred within days of the flight. One involved Todd Blue, a 20-year-old airman who was in a unit that guarded weapons at Minot. He reportedly shot himself in the head on Sept. 11 while on a visit to his family in Wytheville, Virginia. Local police investigators termed his death a suicide.

The second suicide, on Aug. 30, was John Frueh, a B-52 crewmember at the Air Force's Special Operations command headquartered at Hurlburt AFB in Florida. Hurlburt's website says, "Every night, as millions of Americans sleep peacefully under the blanket of freedom," Air Force Special Operations commandos work "in deep dark places, far away from home, risking their lives to keep that blanket safe."

Frueh, 33, a married father of two who had just received approval for promotion from captain to major, reportedly flew from Florida to Portland, Oregon for a friend's wedding. He never showed up. Instead, he called on Aug. 29, the day the missiles were loaded, from an interstate pull-off just outside Portland to say he was going for a hike in a park nearby. (It is not clear why he was at a highway rest stop as he had no car.) A day later, back in Portland, he rented a car at the airport, again calling his family. After he failed to appear at the wedding, his family filed a missing person's report with the Portland police. The Sheriff's Department in remote Skamania County, Washington, found Frueh's rental car ten days later on the side of a road nearly 120 miles from the airport in a remote area of Badger

Peak. Search dogs found his body in the woods. His death was ruled a suicide, though neither the sheriff's investigator nor the medical examiner would give details. What makes this alleged suicide odd, however, is that the sheriff reports that Frueh had with him a knapsack containing a GPS locator and a videocam—odd equipment for someone intent on ending his life.

Of course, it could be that all six of these deaths are coincidences—all just accidents and personal tragedies. But when they occur around the time six nuclear-tipped missiles go missing in a bizarre incident, the likes of which the Pentagon hasn't seen before, one would think investigators would be on those cases like vultures on carrion. In fact, police and medical examiners on the Frueh and Blue cases say no federal investigators, whether from DOD or FBI, have called them. Worse still, because the B-52 incident got so little media attention—no coverage in most local news—none of those investigating the accidents and suicides even knew about it or about the other deaths.

"It would have been interesting to know all that when I was examining Mr. Blue's body," says coroner Mike Stoker, "but no one told me about any of it or asked me about him."

"If we had known that several people had died under questionable circumstances, it might have affected how we'd look at a body," says Don Phillips, the sheriff's deputy who investigated the Frueh death. "But nobody from the federal government has ever contacted us about this."

"Certainly, in a case like this, the suicides should be a red flag," says Hans Kristensen, a nuclear-affairs expert with the Federation of American Scientists. "It's wild speculation to think that there might be some connection between the deaths and the incident, but it certainly should be investigated."

The Air Force and Defense Department's response to the incident has not been particularly comforting. Initially, while the discovery of the nukes by Barksdale ground crew workers led to the declaration of a "bent spear" incident with an alert going directly to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and on up to President Bush immediately, there was no public report on the worst case of missing nuclear weapons in the country's history until an article appeared on Sept. 5 in *Military Times*, a privately run newspaper popular with military readers. *Military Times* staff reporter Michael Hoffman says he learned of the incident from three military whistleblowers who were upset at what had happened and concerned that it was being hushed up.

Indeed, the *Washington Post*, in its article on the incident states that initially the Air Force sought to keep it all "under wraps," saying in one report, "No press interest anticipated." It was a full week before the squadron commander in charge of munitions crews at Minot was removed from duty and the crewmembers involved were decertified for nuclear duties. Only two weeks after the incident, on Sept. 14, did Gates order a one-day stand-down of all military aircraft in the U.S. for an inventory of the country's nuclear weapons and a check of handling procedures.

Former Air Force Col. Sam Gardiner, who taught for 25 years at the War College, says it is highly unusual for military people to go outside the chain of the command to speak to the media. He says of the whistleblowers in this case, "This administration has clearly done a lot of damage in the way it oversold the Iraq War, and I think a lot of military people no longer believe that they can trust truth-telling by their senior officers. Guys in the ranks these days think that their senior officers are going to be political, not professional."

Kristensen agrees: "It was truly remarkable that three military people went public with this. You have to wonder whether the DOD investigation would have happened if news of the flight hadn't come out in the press."

Meanwhile, another issue has been raised—this time by a former Naval officer who worked in electronic warfare. "It is impossible for this incident to have happened as a result of an accident by weapons handlers," insists Don Lee. "In the Navy, I was aware that nuclear weapons had all kinds of technologies, even in the 1980s, that would set off all kinds of alarms if you tried to move them or take them out of a storage bunker, and I'm sure those systems have been improved on over the intervening 20 years." He observes, "You can be sure that if Wal-Mart can use electronic systems to prevent you from walking out the door without paying for something, the military has systems that can prevent you from walking out with a nuke. Those systems would have had to be deliberately turned off."

Good point. If the Air Force hasn't made use of chip technology, familiar to virtually every retailer in the country, to tag its nukes and trigger alarms, it certainly should have—and in an era when it has been facing personnel shortages (the *Post* said people available for guard duty have been getting harder to come by), the obvious solution would have been a technological fix. The Air Force has no comment on this line of questioning.

The blogosphere has understandably been full of speculation about what "really happened" at Minot. One conjecture is that it was all an elaborate bit of theater designed to put Iran on edge, but that seems like a stretch. Then there are the suggestions that the six nuclear warheads and perhaps the cruise missiles and the bomber itself were destined for Iran. Barksdale, as many have noted, is a primary staging area for B-52s bound for

use in the Middle East theater, as the base boasts on its own website. Fuelling such sometimes-fevered thinking are reports, most recently in *Newsweek*, that Vice President Dick Cheney has been pressing for an attack on Iran's nuclear processing facilities and that his office has sought to press Israel to launch an attack itself on Iran in hopes of bringing the U.S. into a conflict with Iran.

Coyle and also Gardiner (who does think an American attack on Iran is a possibility) both scoff at the idea, noting that the U.S., if it wanted to use them, has plenty of nuclear weapons and delivery systems loaded on its aircraft carriers, which are operating in the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea. They also discount the notion of a "second chain of command" in the military originating in Cheney's office.

Still, given the unprecedented penchant for secrecy in this administration, and the evidence of a schism between many senior officers in the military and the vice president's office over the wisdom of attacking Iran, it is understandable that people are wondering if we're getting the full, or even the real, story of what happened on Aug. 29 and 30.

After initially only receiving a closed-door briefing by the Air Force, Congress appears to be starting to take a more active interest in the incident. Rep. Ellen Tauscher (D-Calif.) announced late last week that her strategic weapons subcommittee would be scheduling hearings to investigate what happened at Minot and Barksdale. It is not clear how much of those hearings will be open to the public and the media, or which movie plot Tauscher intends to investigate. ■

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Ahmadinejad's Transfer Credits

Rarely has such an irrelevant foreign politician generated so many headlines. And Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad would never have received all the

attention he did during his visit to New York, where he was invited to speak at Columbia University, had both sides of the Iran policy debate not decided to make him a symbol of their respective positions. This has raised his profile and invested him with a significance he could never have achieved on his own, since his official, constitutionally weak position gives him no real control over his country's foreign policy or military apparatus.

In trying to "engage" a demagogic figurehead, some faculty members at Columbia apparently wanted to defuse anti-Iranian jingoistic sentiment. One of the instructors instrumental in inviting Ahmadinejad, Professor Richard Bulliet, wrote in the *Washington Post*: "it was my hope that through listening to and observing the new bogeyman of American politics firsthand, the slide toward war that has been building in certain precincts of our executive branch and the media might be slowed." Rather, the visit played right into the hands of the Cheneys and Podhoretzes and undermined opponents of confrontation with Iran.

The entire episode and the arguments advanced in defense of the invitation have tied the legitimate idea of dialogue and, by extension, negotiation with Iran, to a widely detested figure. Ahmadinejad is so universally loathed in Western elite opinion that the host of the Columbia forum, university President Lee Bollinger, felt compelled to denounce his putative guest as a "petty and cruel dictator." Clearly, there was to be no dialogue. Propaganda was the order of the day for both participants. Ahmadinejad easily

evaded or turned around every hostile question, just as he always does, all the while striking the pose of the aggrieved seeker after truth and lover of science. Asked about Holocaust denial, he spoke of his love of the Jewish people and the need for more extensive research into the historical question. Asked about the subjection of women in Iran, he referred to the superior respect shown to women.

Reinforcing the false image of Ahmadinejad as Hitler *redivivus* ruling Iran with an iron fist, Bollinger managed to appease slightly the warmongers who had been baying for his blood, but not without destructive result. For the exchange gave Ahmadinejad the platform and prestige he craves, which is bad enough for those who would like to see his brand of politics in Iran weakened. Further, it fueled interventionists' push for an attack.

Bollinger's speech managed at once to say nothing beyond rehashed talking points while being sufficiently combative to cast Ahmadinejad as an injured party to many of his countrymen. This is certainly how the event has been received by the Iranian establishment: 200 members of the Majlis protested the treatment afforded Ahmadinejad, and the heads of seven Iranian universities replied to Bollinger's questions with a series of questions of their own invoking the U.S.-backed 1953 coup and American support for Iraq during the 1980-88 war. Iranian media enthused over the president's exploits, with the *Iran News* declaring, "By fearlessly and courageously walking into the 'Lion's Den'... he

is sure to become even more of a hero in the Arab-Muslim street than before."

Favorable reaction will not be limited to his base of support in Iran. Mohammad Bazzi, a visiting fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, confirmed that the visit will build up Ahmadinejad's reputation throughout the region: "After his speech this week at Columbia University, Ahmadinejad's stock in the Arab street is sure to rise even higher: Citizens of Iran and the Arab world are angry at Columbia University president Lee Bollinger for insulting the Iranian leader during his introduction." Whatever else it did, the hectoring of Ahmadinejad has reinforced the impression in the minds of many Iranians and Arabs that Americans are obnoxious meddlers telling them what they ought to do in their own countries.

Even a demagogue's critics often resent foreign mockery. One of Ahmadinejad's main rivals, Mohsen Mirdamadi, confirmed that the visit had harmed the cause of reform in Iran. "The remarks by the Columbia University president were like an indictment against the Iranian president. Ahmadinejad's opponents don't support this," Mirdamadi said. "The blistering speech against Ahmadinejad only strengthened him back home and made his radical supporters more determined." Giving the Iranian government anything it can use to link domestic dissenters with foreign influences and ideas is typically damaging to the cause of internal reform, and in this sense, the ridiculing of Ahmadinejad has been an unparalleled boon for the worst elements in Iran and a disaster for their opponents.

If the goal of inviting him was to help deepen hostility between our two governments, it is hard to think how Columbia could have done better. ■

Superpower Trip

Plagued by narcissism and impatience, U.S. foreign policy betrays all of the symptoms of Criminal Thinking.

By Jim Pittaway

OUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER recently printed comments from our esteemed senators, Max Baucus and Jon Tester. Responding to General Petraeus's report, both roundly denounced the hapless Iraqi government for, as Max put it, "failing to do what they need to do and that is stand on their own two feet." Tester chimed in with the requisite paean: "While our troops are performing magnificently, the Iraqi government is making no progress at all."

The political expediency of this formula is obvious, but the mindset it reveals could not be more disturbing. It's as if you set your neighbor's house on fire, loaned him your garden hose to put it out, then blamed him for the damage to the neighborhood when he was unable to put out the fire you started. In the work I do, which involves forensic status evaluations of criminal offenders, this blame-the-victim mentality is sadly familiar. It is an essential and characteristic piece of what we call Criminal Thinking.

Over the last decade, applying what we know about Criminal Thinking has been the single bright spot in the dreadful business of dealing with America's expanding criminal-offender population. Virtually all of our court and prison systems have implemented increasingly sophisticated programs to address the core beliefs that drive the truly recidivist portion of our offender population. Criminal Thinking programs have produced genuine breakthroughs in rehabilitating individuals by

identifying, deconstructing, and then reconstructing their antisocial habits of mind. Perhaps more importantly, we have been able to do a much better job of screening the intractable predators who cannot change and deploying resources to keep them in "the system."

An overview of our understandings of Criminal Thinking is helpful in drawing important distinctions between healthy, ethically coherent traditions of American patriotism and the antisocial pathologies of our New Nationalism, to which the statements of our senators shamelessly pander. While applying concepts derived from individual psychology to social phenomena is tricky, the contrast between the antisocial nature of much of our current political discourse and the heritage of traditional American patriotism shows that this analytic framework is as predictive of grave consequences to societies as it is for individuals.

The unholy triad at the core of antisocial thinking is narcissism, impatience, and need for control. None of these are inherently bad. All of history's great leaders have been narcissistic; in combination with generosity of spirit, you get Lincoln; in combination with meanness of spirit, you get Henry VIII. When systems or persons are out of control, a need to control is legitimate. Impatience can be the enemy of lethargy and complacency, fatal for both people and societies. But combine the three, and you have a quintessentially predatory entity.

The narcissistic predator carries senses of special entitlement and deep grievance. He is never properly appreciated and is inevitably misunderstood. Entitlement comes with a set of rules for conduct that apply only to this individual. His victimization of others is always justified by his sense of grievance, animated by the pain of never being appreciated, and, because he will never be understood anyway, he can shroud his life in deceit. To the narcissistic personality, error and adverse consequences must be driven by faults and mistakes of others, unfair circumstances, inexplicable malice, unforeseen complications, and so on.

This is why the inherently narcissistic idea of American exceptionalism is such a two-edged sword. Harnessed to coherent ethics and healthy appraisals of ourselves and others, it becomes a challenge for us to do better and a vehicle for enhancing social cohesion among citizens. Combined with entitlement, impatience, and a need to control, it produces the Iraq War, Guantanamo, and thousands of little Abu Ghraib moments. Our sense of entitlement justifies inhabiting our own special moral and ethical universe, just like the antisocial, and because we are never properly appreciated or understood, we can perpetrate crimes against innocents and guilty alike and justify lying about them to ourselves and others, just like those folks who come through my office two or three times a week.

Another important feature of the criminal mind is the inability to foresee and to learn from consequences. Pro-social minds process consequences as a deterrent to the behaviors that brought them about; the antisocial, whose uniqueness confers a sense of immunity, is incapable of appreciating that consequences occur as the direct result of his actions. This is where systems of denial come into play, and the criminal thinker will confabulate endlessly to explain away consequences that, if properly processed, would threaten his sense of entitlement and control. Just as the alcoholic's DUI is never caused by the abuse of alcohol, the consequences of crime are never caused by the antisocial criminal's thinking or even his behavior.

Thus Senator Tester's further comment, "Refereeing a civil war in Iraq has distracted us from fighting a war in Afghanistan," is an excellent example of Criminal Thinking and its consequences. It lays blame on others and endorses the continuation of the very behaviors that created the problem in the first place. Unable to accept consequences, our political leaders, like recidivist criminals, are unable to make the crucial reassessment of thought and behavior necessary to avoid continuously bad outcomes. The old AA nostrum that the definition of insanity is engaging in the same behaviors and expecting different results sadly applies to our political leadership in both parties. Though he was elected specifically to make good-faith efforts to get us out of the mess in Iraq, Tester, embracing political expediency and an antisocial mindset, can only contribute to the worsening of our enormous problems.

A sense of this futility dawning among many Montanans undoubtedly weighs on his job approval rating which, when I last checked was 41 percent and dropping. This explains his dismayed former supporters, who simply cannot believe

what he has become and are even more grieved that the mandate of the last election has come to nothing. But there's no reason for Jon Tester to worry. As long as he stays away from notorious crooks and keeps his eyes to the front in men's rooms, the high-powered marketers who handle him will engineer a campaign based on telling people how wonderful they are, how unfair the world is to them, and he'll be home free as long as—like the recidivist criminal—he never takes responsibility for anything.

Another salient characteristic of Criminal Thinking is the inability of the antisocial to register empathy. The skillful can mimic it in circumstances that do not directly affect them or when it may direct scrutiny away from them or their activities or when it may help them keep people confused about their nature or intent. A competent evaluator who understands Criminal Thinking can unravel this manipulative behavior by redirecting focus onto the actual victims of the predator to reveal the logical contortions that exclude empathetic response by this type of offender. A good example of empathetic displacement as a tactic would be how our ruling class is beside itself with empathy for the suffering people of Darfur, a situation where there is no reasonable theory of their responsibility and that, happily, they cannot be expected to do anything about.

To be fair, it is impossible for our elite to express genuine empathy in proportion to unspeakable hardship and relentless havoc visited upon the people of Iraq as a direct consequence of the American invasion. To acknowledge the horrific extent of what we have done to those very real people, their ancient society, and the world they inhabit would fly in the face of New Nationalism. That would open a dissenter to charges of undermining our troops, aiding terrorism, perhaps being labeled

a "native-born enemy combatant," and all sorts of such nonsense that would amount to career suicide in our nationalistically fevered political environment.

Entitlement and lack of empathy are a bad enough combination, but it is the need to control others that makes this a truly dynamic criminal pathology. Disordered need to control not only breeds excess in the behavior of criminal offenders, it fosters delusions about the extent and possibilities of exercising control that distance the criminal mind even further from reality and drive progressively worse decision making. Our New Nationalism demands an unstinting endorsement of American omnipotence by public figures. Interestingly, the more evidence we get of the limits of American power, the more stridently our ability to control obscure behaviors by people in remote corners of the world must be proclaimed. This is as good an example as one can find of a maladaptive and pathological belief-system operating in denial of reason and possibility. Its link to bad decisions is obvious.

In this construct, any failure to control must necessarily be failure on the part of whoever was supposed to do the controlling; the core idea of America's potential to control everything can never be questioned. This logically absurd notion is an irreducible component of both the criminal personality and our New Nationalism. So like the habituated criminal, nationalist America does not have to accommodate society around us and instead must pursue ever more desperate measures to control things that cannot, and ought not, be controlled.

A real eye-rolling example of the futility of this thinking would be our belief that we have a right to control the education system in Pakistan. We don't like those *madrassas* any more than they like us. So we lean on the president of Pakistan to shut them down. If he did that, he would be history and Pakistan's

nuke would soon be in the hands of the people running those *madrassas*, who resent us because we try to control them and think we are entitled to behave this way. This is the kind of progression of increasingly less desirable outcomes experienced by the Criminal-Thinking offender when he tries to take control of a situation, loses it, escalates, and winds up dead or in prison for crimes he never intended to commit when he started out. As long as he cannot self-regulate, and the criminal thinker cannot, he is doomed to play out to the end.

An important part of this sequence is the antisocial criminal's inability to recognize the personhood of any individual who might stand in the way of achieving his aims. His P.O. is an a--hole, his girlfriend's a skank, his boss is a moron. He applies negative labels to his victims to show that they all ask for it by not meeting his real or imagined needs and not submitting to his control. In thrall to the New Nationalism, the list of people and societies we view as legitimate is shrinking everyday. It has become normative to attempt to delegitimize not only our implacable enemies but any group or nation that might have the temerity to differ with Nationalist America. This is how the criminal thinker, in an escalating situation, is unable to see how his behaviors effect others and accomplishes nothing except to narrow his options, until the inevitable reckoning in the courtroom or the morgue, where he is finally and completely on his own.

That this is the fate of nations as well as individuals is an unarguable fact of history. We used to have leaders who not only thought and talked about, but actually believed in ideas like "malice toward none, and charity for all," "a decent regard for the opinions of mankind," and having "nothing to fear except fear itself." These powerful statements of militantly pro-social beliefs once defined American patriotism.

From the moment the Founding Fathers looked at the Articles of Confederation, admitted they had made a mistake, and set out to fix it, right up to the civil-rights movement, the best of America has always been produced through taking our own inventory and fixing it. Self-control—not controlling others—is at the heart of American patriotic tradition.

But security to self-regulate, like decency, charity, and confidence, is a disposable commodity in an environment of total and perpetual war with implacable and fiendish enemies. These virtues have no use in a world that never understands us, conspires to deny us our entitlements, and resists our attempts to control, as our leaders tell us we must in order to survive. But all this fear and loathing obscures the fact that, just like the antisocial, Nationalist American leadership can mimic self-regulation and adaptation from time to time. But they don't want to do it, don't need to do it, and have sadly been incapable of doing it for some time now.

It's impossible not to draw comparisons to the belief systems of 20th-century nationalist Europe. Nothing says "entitlement" quite like the Master Race, and if the death camps aren't the apotheosis of impatience, I'd like to know what is. Invading all of your neighbors is clear evidence that your need to control is out of control. So we have Germany of the early 1940s, steeped in Criminal Thinking, led by its politicians and enthusiastically endorsed its people.

Now consider the very same Germany later in the decade. In the space of a handful of years, something changed profoundly. I would submit that this change was really very simple: When you're living in the rubble you've created, narcissism is difficult to sustain. When you have to engage in a daily struggle to survive, impatience is useless if not deadly. When you have been defeated so thoroughly that you lack

both capability and will to resist those who beat you, you don't control anything. By 1950, those same German people and their leadership reverted to pro-social thinking in government. It has succeeded marvelously.

Today Germany plays well with others, which the narcissist cannot do. It advocates patience in the forums of which it is part. It leads the EU in the devolution of power to the regions, and when exercising control of others is necessary, it insists that it be shared. Additionally, and perhaps unsurprisingly, it is not into malice and does charity better than just about anyone. Germans' regard for the opinions of mankind borders on reverence; they are calm, stable, resilient. That should make us think. It may be that postwar Germans are better Americans than what we have become.

We should be mindful that Nazi Germany, too, convinced itself that it was hated and conspired against because of its virtue rather than its thuggery, just as we proclaim that we are hated because of our "freedom" rather than our disordered need to control and the excess it breeds. There's no evidence that the Nazi leadership thought of themselves as criminals, let alone intended to become the most notorious criminals in the history of the human race. They were just a bunch of thugs who, implementing a classically antisocial system of thought and behavior, found their options progressively narrowed, as all such criminal thinkers do, until they wound up with death camps, suicide, and a rubble-dwelling *Volk*. The anti-social nature of Nationalism is there in the historical record, written in the blood of millions, and available for all to contemplate. The only question is, are we too far down the road to turn around? ■

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The Unquiet Graham Greene

President Bush's invocation of Alden Pyle reveals his dangerous naïveté.

By Joseph Pearce

THERE WAS SOMETHING bizarre, indeed something almost surreal, about George W. Bush's recent reference to Graham Greene's novel *The Quiet American* in his speech to the National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Attempting to draw a parallel between the conflict in Vietnam and the current conflagration in Iraq, Bush criticized Greene's suggestion that the "quiet American's" patriotism was dangerously naïve:

In 1955 ... Graham Greene wrote a novel called *The Quiet American*. It was set in Saigon, and the main character was a young government agent named Alden Pyle. He was a symbol of American purpose and patriotism—and dangerous naïveté.

Bush's unexpected sortie into the fictional world of Greene was itself dangerously naïve, especially as several commentators had already suggested that Bush is little more than a real-life incarnation of Alden Pyle. It was also both bemusing and amusing to see Bush reference a work that almost everyone presumed he had never read. Certainly, if he had read *The Quiet American*, he would not have made the rudimentary error of referring to Pyle as the novel's "main character," a distinction that belongs to Thomas Fowler, a disillusioned and cynical English journalist. Such is the pitiable state of American politics in these sorry days that an uncultured president relies for his semblance of erudition on equally unlettered speechwriters.

Be that as it may, *The Quiet American* is a good place to look at the relative merits of Messieurs Bush and Greene and serves as a meditation on the relationship between New World naïveté and Old World cynicism. If, for example, there is a great deal of George W. Bush in the transparent (and dangerous) shallowness of Alden Pyle, there is more than a hint of Graham Greene in the world-weary depths of Thomas Fowler. Pyle is certain that "Democracy," "Freedom," and "America" are not only inseparable but synonymous. It is almost as though they form an indivisible trinity as holy as the Trinity of the Christians and as worthy of praise. This quasi-religious zeal turns every war for Democracy into a *jihad*, with Pyle emerging as a fanatic for the cause of "America" in much the same way that the new breed of Muslim terrorists emerge as fanatics for "Islam." It must be said, however, that Pyle is much more likeable than any Islamic fanatic and is even disarmingly charming in his simple, unquestioning faith in the Motherland. Parallels with Bush are not only palpable, they positively palpitate from the pages of *The Quiet American*!

But what of Thomas Fowler, the wastrel whose jaded presence dominates the novel? Whereas Pyle is puritanical and abstemious, Fowler is an opium-addicted Baudelairean decadent. Whereas Pyle is an idealist—albeit an idealist enslaved by an ideology (ironically like his communist enemies)—Fowler is cynically indifferent to all ideals. Whereas Pyle is decorously prim

in his dealings with women—and particularly in his chivalrous dealings with Phuong, the woman at the center of his and Fowler's desires—Fowler is unremittingly self-serving in his carnal relations, deserting his wife and children and seeing in Phuong little more than a comfortable and convenient *ménage*, indulging her as an addictive habit that, like opium, allows him to escape temporarily from his responsibility to reality. Whereas Pyle is motivated by an illusory heaven on earth, a heaven of "Democracy" and "Freedom" (again, ironically, like his communist enemies), Fowler shuns heaven and purgatory and desires only the adulterous hell of Paolo and Francesca in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. (Referring to an unwanted promotion that would force him to return to England, Fowler muses, "Dante never thought up that turn of the screw for his condemned lovers. Paolo was never promoted to Purgatory.") Pyle is willing to be a martyr for his false heaven; Fowler tells heaven (and Purgatory) to go to hell.

Who then is worse: the puritanically idealistic Pyle or the morally iconoclastic Fowler? What is worse: the messianic Americanism of George W. Bush or the jaded, ethno-masochistic death wish of most of the leaders of Europe? New World naïveté or Old World cynicism? That is the question. Should we choose one or the other, selecting the better of two evils; or are we at liberty, with Mercutio in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, to call down a plague on both their houses?

And what of Graham Greene himself? Is it fair to associate him too closely with his fictional anti-hero, Thomas Fowler? It is true that, like Fowler, he deserted his wife and children, and it is true that, like Fowler, he settled into a number of adulterous liaisons in the years after he left his wife. It is also true that, as with Fowler, his Catholic wife would not contemplate a divorce (though Fowler's fictional wife eventually relented). Yet these similarities, though certainly not superficial, serve only to mask the very real differences that exist between the life and beliefs of the author and those of his fictional creation. Unlike the doggedly godless Fowler, Greene was, and remained for the most part, a believing Catholic, a fact that separates him not only from Fowler but from the dogmatically godless leadership of Europe. Greene is, therefore, an enigma that warrants further investigation.

Greene's conversion to Catholicism in 1926 was influenced, in the first instance, by the fact that the woman whom he would later marry was herself a convert. It would, however, be a grave error to explain, or explain away, Greene's Catholicism as little more than an effort to please the woman he loved. Other Catholic influences were also at work, such as his evident admiration for the works of Eliot and Chesterton. Greene's early novels, such as *Stamboul Train* and *Brighton Rock*, were set in Eliotic wastelands, inhabited by hollow men, in which we nonetheless detect, as with Eliot's poems, the hinted at, haunting presence of an (almost) invisible Christ. His second novel, *The Name of Action*, published in 1930, employed several lines from Eliot's "The Hollow Men" as its epigraph.

Greene's admiration for Chesterton emerged in his review of Maisie Ward's biography of the writer, in which Greene described Chesterton's *Orthodoxy*, *The Thing*, and *The Everlasting Man* as

"among the great books of the age" and similarly praised several of Chesterton's other books, including *The Ballad of the White Horse* and the novels *The Man Who Was Thursday* and *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*. It is also significant that Greene would always consider Newman's *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, a classic of conversion literature, as one of his favorite books.

If, therefore, Greene's Catholicism can be viewed as genuine, it doesn't alter the fact that his practice of the faith, and his expression of it in his works, was, at best, enigmatic, and, at worst, downright disreputable and heretical. Greene knew as much, declaring to Malcolm Muggeridge, upon the latter's reception into the Church in 1982, that he hoped "you will make a better Catholic than I have done." And yet, beguilingly and paradoxically, Greene's troubled faith, and his marital infidelity, provided the inherent tension in the labyrinthine morality plays that were his novels.

Greene deserted his family shortly after the end of World War II, leaving his wife for another woman. Vivien Greene remembered vividly the day that her husband left: "It was very difficult with the children. ... We went upstairs into the drawing room and then he left. And I thought, well, I'll probably never see him again and looked out of the window that was facing the street, and he looked back for a minute, didn't wave, but looked back." This dramatic moment clearly haunted Greene as well, for it emerges, ghost-like, in *The Quiet American* when Fowler turned random memories over in his mind: "a fox ... seen by the light of an enemy flare ... the body of a bayoneted Malay ... my wife's face at a window when I came home to say goodbye for the last time."

Greene's contorted conscience twisted itself agonizingly through the plot of *The Heart of the Matter*, the novel he wrote shortly after his desertion of his

family, in which the moral convulsions of Scobie left many critics squirming. Whereas some writers, including Evelyn Waugh, Edward Sackville-West, and Raymond Mortimer, had suggested that Scobie was a sinful saint, others had seen only the sinner: "Scobie commits adultery, sacrilege, murder (indirectly), and suicide in quick succession," one correspondent wrote. "In three of these cases he is well aware of what he is doing ... he takes communion in mortal sin because he can't bear to hurt his wife's feelings. This isn't the way a saint behaves." These views were reiterated in another review by a Father John Murphy:

Scobie is a Catholic with a conscience of the highest sensitivity and insight whose weak will ultimately leads him to adultery, sacrilegious Holy Communion, responsibility for a murder ... and for full measure, to a suicide. ... How can you account for the fact that a man commits suicide in order, among other things, to avoid making any more bad Communion? But the answer is obvious: Because he despaired where he should have repented.

Another member of the Catholic clergy, in this case a bishop, reminded the author of *The Heart of the Matter* that "adultery is adultery whatever attempts may be made to disguise it by not using the hard word." Equally ruthless in his criticism was George Orwell, who opined that if Scobie "really felt that adultery is mortal sin he would stop committing it. ... If he believed in Hell, he would not risk going there merely to spare the feelings of a couple of neurotic women."

At the other end of the critical spectrum, the Jesuit C.C. Martindale described *The Heart of the Matter* as "a magnificent book," adding that its effect on one "hard-headed man to whom this book was given" had been to serve as "the last necessary stimulus" to his

becoming a Catholic. Another correspondent wished it to be “put on record ... that one great sinner was so moved by Mr Greene’s last book that he has completely changed his way of life and returned to the practice of the Faith.”

Greene’s own response to the critical reaction indicated that these repentant sinners, rather than the novel’s detractors, had the deepest affinity with his own understanding of the novel: “I did not regard Scobie as a saint,” he wrote to Waugh, “and his offering his damnation up was intended to show how muddled a mind of good will could become when once ‘off the rails.’” Ironically these words would become prophetically autobiographical. The longer Greene remained “off the rails,” the more muddled he became in his approach to Catholicism.

By the time that Greene wrote his play “The Potting Shed” in 1957, even old friends and allies, such as Evelyn Waugh, were losing patience with his heterodox dabblings. The play was “great nonsense theologically,” Waugh complained, “and will puzzle people needlessly.” Three years later, after Greene wrote to Waugh of how his latest novel, *A Burnt Out Case*, was intended “to give expression to various states or moods of belief or unbelief” and that the characterization of the doctor had represented “a settled and easy atheism,” Waugh replied impatiently that many would see the novel “as a recantation of faith”: “To my mind the expression ‘settled and easy atheism’ is meaningless, for an atheist denies his whole purpose as a man—to love and serve God. Only in the most superficial way can atheists appear ‘settled and easy.’”

As Waugh observed Greene’s descent from the realm of reason and creed to that of mere mood, one wonders whether he was reminded of the wit of his friend Ronald Knox who had written half a century earlier of the similar descent from faith to “feeling” of Anglican Modernists

who “... temp’ring bigot Zeal, Corrected ‘I believe’ to ‘One does feel...’”

In his last years, Greene showed a few tentative signs of returning to a more orthodox practice of the faith, though it would be an exaggeration to describe his Catholicism as “settled and easy.” “I’ve betrayed a great number of things and people in the course of my life,” he stated in 1979, “which probably explains this uncomfortable feeling I have about myself, this sense of having been cruel, unjust. It still torments me often enough before I go to sleep.”

HE NEVER FELT COMFORTABLE WITH CATHOLICISM, BUT THEN HE NEVER FELT COMFORTABLE WITH ANYTHING ELSE EITHER.

It is in this tormented light that we must view Graham Greene’s relationship with his faith, his life, and his work. He never felt comfortable with Catholicism, but then he never felt comfortable with anything else either. Like St. Thomas the Apostle, whom Greene chose as his confirmation saint, he was a doubter. He doubted others, he doubted himself, and he doubted God. And yet the profundity of his novels never resides in the doubt itself but in the ultimate doubt about the doubt. It was this doubt about doubt that kept him clinging desperately to the Catholic faith.

Greene was paradox personified. He was a pessimistic pessimist in the positive sense in which he was always pessimistic about his own pessimism and in the positive sense in which these two negatives made a contribution to the true moral depth of his work.

If, however, we can finish our investigation of Greene’s doubtful depths on a high note, acquitting him of being associated too closely with the cynicism of Thomas Fowler in *The Quiet American*, is he as relevant to the present situation as Bush, or his speechwriters, seem to think?

Yes, he is—but not perhaps in the way the president intended.

Back in 1987, Greene was one of the most vocal critics of the Israeli government following the abduction of Mordechai Vanunu from Italy by Israeli agents. Vanunu’s “crime,” in the eyes of the Israelis, was to have exposed the fact that Israel possessed nuclear weapons that, by any stretch of the imagination, can be described as “weapons of mass destruction.” Why is it, one wonders, that some countries in the Middle East can possess weapons of

mass destruction, with Bush’s blessing, while others cannot? Why did previous American governments arm the Taliban and Saddam Hussein in the name of “Freedom” and “Democracy”? Why did Bush’s own government declare war on the only secular government in the Middle East capable of resisting Iran? These are questions that only George W. Bush or Alden Pyle could answer. The rest of us remain baffled.

Bush quoted a character in *The Quiet American* who said of Pyle that he had never known a man “who had better motives for all the trouble he caused.” Like Pyle, Bush is well-intentioned. Like Pyle, he is dangerously naïve. Like Pyle, his noble motives have caused a lot of trouble. And, like Pyle, he needs reminding of the old adage that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. ■

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Arts & Letters

FILM

[*The Assassination of Jesse James
by the Coward Robert Ford*]

Overkill in the Wild West

By Steve Sailer

WHILE HOLLYWOOD is routinely scorned as a haven for illiterates, the modern movie industry's clean little secret is its inordinate veneration of writers. Increasingly, screenwriters are allowed to direct their own scripts, turning the Auteur Theory into a reality a half century after it was concocted by fantasizing Frenchmen ignorant of how Golden Age Hollywood actually worked.

No movie illustrates film folks' infatuation with the written word more than the accurate, intelligent, and magnificent-looking yet unentertaining art Western "*The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*," in which Brad Pitt plays the celebrated outlaw and Casey Affleck (Ben's brother) is the sniveling young protégé who shot him in the back of the head in 1882. Writer-director Andrew Dominik has filmed the most faithful adaptation imaginable of Ron Hansen's eloquent and obsessively researched but interminable 1983 historical novel. In Hansen's vast portrait of the "old weird America," we learn, for example, that Jesse was 5'8" and 155 pounds while his battle-axe mother was 6'0" and 228 pounds.

Hansen is an admirable rarity among literary novelists. Besides attending Mass daily and playing golf weekly, he chooses inherently interesting subjects,

such as *Hitler's Niece*. Hansen deserves a less reverent adapter than Dominik, who lifts vast slabs of voice-over narration straight from the book. Moreover, *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford* is a reasonable title for an ambitious novel, whose high-brow readers likely possess some vague awareness of what happened. But movie audiences can't be expected to know *any* history, so the title becomes a post-modernist gimmick that cheats the film of suspense.

Dominik's impressive but dolorous effort about the Missouri murderers seems modeled on Terrence Malick's remarkable 1973 movie "Badlands," recounting Charles Starkweather's nearby 1959 crime spree. Unfortunately, its dirge-like pacing makes it more reminiscent of Malick's excruciatingly slow 2005 version of the Pocahontas tale "The New World."

Still, while Malick was stuck with the pseudo-star Colin Farrell to play Captain John Smith, Dominik at least has a genuine matinee idol to portray his American legend. I suspect that Brad Pitt's career goal has always been to become a respected character actor like, say, Paul Giamatti. But cruel nature has condemned him to be a famous leading man. So he's best cast as a glamorous psychopath, such as Tyler Durden in "Fight Club," Achilles in "Troy," and now as the intuitive, mercurial gunman Jesse James.

As Farrell's deservedly obscure 2001 Jesse James flick "American Outlaws" showed, Jesse and Frank James began as Confederate guerillas. Overall, our Civil War was fought as honorably as any war in history, but the worst exception was the vicious Iraq-like struggle in Missouri and Kansas. The James brothers' long career illustrates the often blurry lines between freedom fighters, terrorists, and gangsters. Resentful of

peace, they turned to robbing banks and trains. Jesse, an outspoken Democrat with a flair for publicity, spun their felonies as an anti-Republican and anti-corporate insurgency. Indeed, they flourished because they swam in a sea of disgruntled ex-Confederate farmers. They failed catastrophically only in 1876 when they tried to raid the bank in Northfield, Minnesota and were defeated by the staunchly Unionist armed citizenry.

After lying low for three years, Jesse returned to robbery in 1879. But the end of Reconstruction in 1877 had deprived him of his putative cause. To replace the brutal but formidable ex-guerillas, such as the three Youngers, who had once made up his war-forged band of brothers, he had to recruit an untrustworthy rabble of "petty thieves and country rubes" motivated only by money and juvenile dreams.

The new film begins in 1881 with 19-year-old Robert Ford insinuating himself into the gang around Jesse, whom he had idolized as a boy reading dime novels. But why murder unarmed train conductors when he could grab for the brass ring of celebrity by shooting Jesse himself?

Meanwhile, Jesse begins downsizing the gang, killing an accomplice he fears will betray him for the \$10,000 price on his head. Who will shoot whom next? "The Assassination ..." resembles the paranoid last 20 minutes of "Goodfellas" dragged out over 160 minutes.

A few days after Jesse's death, Oscar Wilde visited his house in St. Joseph, which was being pulled apart by "relic hunters." He marveled, "The Americans are certainly great hero worshippers, and always take their heroes from the criminal classes," which hasn't changed much in our age of "The Sopranos" and gangsta rap. ■

Rated R for some strong violence and brief sexual references.

BOOKS

[*The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 496 pages]

Two Knights and a Dragon

By Uri Avnery

THERE ARE books that change people's consciousness and change history. Some tell a story, like Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1851 *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which gave a huge impetus to the campaign for the abolition of slavery. Others take the form of a political treatise, like Theodor Herzl's *Der Judenstaat*, which gave birth to the Zionist movement. Or they can be scientific in nature, like Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, which changed the way humanity sees itself. And perhaps political satire, too, can shake the world, like *1984* by George Orwell.

The impact of these books was amplified by their timing. They appeared exactly at the right time, when a large public was ready to absorb their message.

It may well turn out that John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt's *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* is just such a book.

It is a dry, scientific research report, 355 pages long, backed by 106 further pages containing some thousand references to sources. It is not a bellicose book. On the contrary, its style is restrained and factual. The authors take great care not to utter a single negative comment on the legitimacy of the lobby, and, indeed, bend over backward to stress their support for the existence and security of Israel. They let the facts speak for themselves. With the skill of experienced masons, they systematically lay brick upon brick, row upon row, leaving no gap in their argumentation.

This wall cannot be torn down by reasoned argument. Nobody has tried, and nobody is going to. Instead, the authors are being smeared and accused of sinister motives. If the book could be ignored altogether, this would have been done—as has happened to other books that have been buried alive.

The two professors take the bull by the horns. They deal with a subject that is absolutely taboo in the United States, a subject nobody in his right mind would even mention: the enormous influence of the pro-Israel lobby on American foreign policy.

In a remorselessly systematic way, the book analyzes the lobby, takes it apart, describes its *modus operandi*, discloses its financial sources, and lays bare its relations with the White House, the two houses of Congress, the leaders of the two major parties, and prominent media people.

The authors do not call into question the lobby's legitimacy. On the contrary, they show that hundreds of lobbies of this kind play an essential role in the American democratic system. The gun and the medical lobbies, for example, are also very powerful political forces. But the pro-Israel lobby has grown out of all proportion.

It has unparalleled political power. It can silence all criticism of Israel in Congress and the media, bring about the political demise of anyone who dares to break the taboo, and prevent any action that does not conform to the will of the Israeli government.

In its second part, the book shows how the lobby uses its tremendous power in practice: how it has prevented the exertion of any pressure on Israel to forge peace with the Palestinians, how it pushed the United States into the invasion of Iraq, how it is now pushing for wars with Iran and Syria, how it supported the Israeli leadership in the recent war in Lebanon and blocked calls for a ceasefire. Each of these assertions is backed up by so much undeniable evidence and quotations from written material (mainly from Israeli sources) that they cannot be ignored.

Most of these disclosures are nothing new for those in Israel who deal with these matters. I could add a whole chapter from personal experience.

In the late '50s, I visited the U.S. for the first time. A major New York radio station invited me for an interview. Later, they cautioned me, "You can criticize the president [Dwight D. Eisenhower] and the secretary of state [John Foster Dulles] to your heart's content, but please don't criticize Israeli leaders!" At the last moment, the interview was cancelled altogether, and the Iraqi ambassador was invited instead. Criticism was apparently tolerable when it came from an Arab but absolutely not if it came from an Israeli.

In 1970, the respected American Fellowship of Reconciliation invited me for a lecture tour of 30 universities, under the auspices of the Hillel rabbis. When I arrived in New York, I was informed that 29 of the lectures had been cancelled. The sole rabbi who did not cancel, Balfour Brickner, showed me a secret communication of the Anti-Defamation League that proscribed my lectures. It said: "While Knesset Member Avnery can in no way be considered a traitor, his appearance at this time would be deeply divisive." In the end, all the lectures took place under the auspices of Christian chaplains.

I especially remember a depressing experience in Baltimore. A good Jew, who had volunteered to host me, was angered by the cancellation of my lecture and obstinately insisted on putting it on. We combed the streets of the Jewish quarters—mile upon mile of signs with Jewish names—and did not find a single hall whose manager would agree to let the lecture by a member of the Israeli Knesset take place. In the end, we held the lecture in the basement of the building of my host's apartment—and functionaries of the Jewish community came to protest.

That year, during Black September, I held a press conference in Washington, D.C. under the auspices of the Quakers. It seemed to be a huge success. The journalists came straight from a press

conference with Prime Minister Golda Meir and showered me with questions. Almost all the important media were represented. After the planned hour was up, they would not let me go and kept me talking for another hour and a half. But the next day, not a single word appeared in any of the media. Thirty-one years later, in October 2001, I held a press conference on Capitol Hill in Washington and exactly the same thing happened: many of the media were there, they held me for another hour—and not a single word was published.

In 1968, Macmillan, a very respected American publishing house, brought out a book of mine, *Israel Without Zionists*, which was later translated into eight other languages. It described the Israeli-Arab conflict in a very different way and proposed the establishment of a Palestinian state, a revolutionary idea at the time. Not a single review appeared in the American media. I checked at one of the most important bookstores in New York and did not find the book. When I asked a salesman, he found it buried under a heap of volumes and put it on top. Half an hour later, it was hidden again.

The book dealt with the “Two States for Two Peoples” solution long before it became a worldwide consensus and with my proposal for Israel’s integration in “the Semitic Region.” True, I am an Israeli patriot and was elected to the Knesset by Israeli voters. But I criticized the Israeli government—and that was enough.

Now comes this book by the two professors, who criticize the Israeli government from a different angle, and it cannot be buried. This fact, by itself, speaks volumes.

The book is based on an essay that appeared last year in the *London Review of Books* after the American publication that commissioned it refused to print the piece. Now a major American publishing house has released it, an indication that something is moving. The situation has not changed, but it seems that it is now possible at least to talk about it.

The political views of the two professors, which are briefly stated at the end

of the book, are identical with the stand of the Israeli peace forces: the two-state solution, ending the occupation, borders based on the Green Line, and international support for the peace settlement.

Of course they are being accused of anti-Semitism, racism, and hatred of Israel. But if this is anti-Semitism, then most of us are anti-Semites. Only the Christian Zionists—those who openly demand the return of the Jews to this country but secretly prophesy the annihilation of the unconverted Jews at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ—are true lovers of Zion.

Even if not a single bad word about the pro-Israel lobby can be uttered in the U.S., it is far from a secret society, hatching conspiracies like the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion.” On the contrary, AIPAC, the Anti-Defamation League, the Zionist Federation, and the other organizations vociferously boast about their actions and publicly proclaim their incredible successes.

Quite naturally, the diverse components of the lobby compete with each other. Who has the biggest influence on the White House? Who scares the most senators? Who controls more journalists and commentators? This competition causes a permanent escalation because every success by one group spurs the others to redouble their efforts.

This could be very dangerous. A balloon that is inflated to monstrous dimensions can one day burst in the face of American Jews who, by the way, according to the polls, object to many positions adopted by the lobby that claims to speak in their name.

Most of the American public now opposes the Iraq War and considers it a disaster. This majority still does not connect the war with the actions of the pro-Israel lobby. No newspaper and no politician dares to hint at such a connection—yet. But if this taboo is broken, the result may be very dangerous for the Jews and for Israel.

Beneath the surface, a lot of anger directed against the lobby is accumulating. The presidential candidates, who are compelled to grovel at the feet of

AIPAC; the senators and congressmen, who have become slaves of the lobby; the media people, who are forbidden to write what they really think—all these secretly detest the lobby. If this anger explodes, it may hurt us, too.

This lobby has become a Golem. And like the Golem of legend, in the end it will bring disaster on its maker.

If I may be permitted to voice some criticism of my own: when the original article by the two professors appeared, I argued, “the tail is wagging the dog and the dog is wagging the tail.” The tail, of course, is Israel.

Walt and Mearsheimer confirm the first part of the equation, but emphatically deny the second. The central thesis of the book is that the pressure of the lobby causes the United States to act against its own interests (and, in the long run, also against the true interests of Israel). They do not accept my contention, quoted in the book, that Israel acted in Lebanon as “America’s Rotweiler” (to Hezbollah as “Iran’s Doberman.”)

I agree that the United States is acting against its true interest—and the true interests of Israel—but the American leadership does not see it that way. Bush and his people believe—even without the input of the lobby—that it would be advantageous for the U.S. to establish a permanent American military presence in the middle of this region of huge oil reserves. In my view, this counterproductive act was one of the main objectives of the war, side by side with the desire to eliminate one of Israel’s most dangerous enemies. Unfortunately, the book deals only very briefly with this issue.

That does not diminish in any way my profound admiration for the intellectual qualities, integrity, and courage of Walt and Mearsheimer, two knights who, like St. George, have sallied forth to face a dragon. ■

Uri Avnery, a former fighter with the Irgun, is a veteran Israeli peace activist who heads the organization Gush Shalom.

[*Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the U.S.*, Trita Parsi, Yale University Press, 361 pages]

Machiavellians in the Mideast

By Leon Hadar

AT A TIME WHEN Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad declares, “the regime occupying Qods [Jerusalem] must vanish from the pages of time,” describes the Holocaust as “a myth,” and is portrayed by Israeli leaders as a “new Hitler,” it’s difficult to imagine that not so long ago, Iran and Israel were close trade partners and covert military allies working together to contain the common threat of Arab nationalism.

And now that the U.S. has ousted Saddam, occupies Mesopotamia, and is being pressed by Israel and its supporters in Washington to take action against Iran, it’s interesting to recall that not so long ago, the United States considered Iran and Israel part of a pro-American bloc in the Middle East supposed to protect U.S. interests.

As Israel now relies on its partnership with Washington to help counterbalance the power of Iran, the irony is that the Iranians, under the leadership of both the secular Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and the fundamentalist Ayatollah Seyyed Ruollah Khomeini, were hoping that Tehran’s ties with the Israelis would make it more likely that the Americans would assist the Persian-Shi’ites of Iran in their struggle against the Arab-Sunnis that controlled Iraq.

And guess who was arguing, following the 1979 Iranian Revolution and throughout the ensuing Iraq-Iran War that it was in America’s interest to establish ties with Tehran’s mullahs—only to contend 20 years later that the U.S. needs to use military power to oust these same mullahs? That would be renowned neoconservative strategic thinker Michael “Creative Destruction” Ledeen, who as Trita Parsi points

out in *Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran and the U.S.* has for decades advanced the notion that American and Israeli interests in the Middle East are inseparable. Hence, when it looked as if Saddam was going to emerge as a hegemon in the Persian Gulf and pose a threat to Israel, Ledeen promoted détente with Tehran and was even willing to work with shady Israeli and Iranian middlemen in what came to be known as the Iran-Contra Affair. (Later, when Iran seemed to be making gains in the war, other neocons like Daniel Pipes and Laurie Mylroie encouraged the United States to provide Saddam with upgraded weapons and intelligence ostensibly to counterbalance Iran’s successes.) When Saddam’s ouster—a move Ledeen advocated—provided Iran with an opportunity to emerge as a hegemon in the Persian Gulf and as a major threat to Israel, the American Enterprise Institute’s finest began beating the drums for war with Iran.

Parsi, a Washington-based Middle East expert who teaches at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, suggests in his original and provocative analysis that despite the dramatic changes in ideological orientations in Tehran (the Islamic Revolution) and Tel Aviv (the rise of the nationalist Likud Party), the Iranians and the Israelis have continued to co-operate on military and strategic fronts. The fact that the two powers sustained their romance while continuing to demonize and counterbalance one another should not come as a shock. There’s no paradox here. It’s the national interest, stupid!

Indeed, contrary to the Manichean narrative—the good guys vs. the bad—dies—that many policymakers and pundits use to explain international politics, Parsi’s *realpolitik* conceptual framework helps the reader understand why the Israelis and Iranians can be close partners and fierce adversaries at the same time. They’re the “rival twins” of the Middle East. Indeed, so much of what has occurred on the Iran-Israel

front and affected their relationship with Washington over the last 60 years reflects the kaleidoscopic nature of the Middle East, where interests are grounded in geostrategic and geoeconomic concerns, as well as tribal, ethnic, and religious commitments—not grand ideological designs.

While noting that bonds between Persians and Jews are more than 2,000 years old, dating back to the marriage of Persia’s Xerxes and Queen Esther in the 5th century BC, Parsi focuses on more recent history, from the Pahlavi dynasty and the Zionist founders of the state of Israel. A central component of the modern Israeli-Iranian relationship has been the so-called “periphery doctrine,” drawn up by Israel’s first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, in the early 1950s. It called for Israel, as part of a strategy to contain threats from a hostile Arab world, to court all those in the broader Middle East who didn’t naturally fall in the Arab-Muslim fold. Israel thus nurtured ties not only with Iran, where the majority of the population is non-Arab and Shi’ite (most Arabs are Sunni), but also with Christian Ethiopia and non-Arab Turkey. In addition, Israel sought relations with a long belt of minorities, stretching from the non-Arab Berbers in North Africa and the Christian Copts in Egypt to the non-Arab Kurds in Iraq and the Druze in Syria. At the same time, the evolving relationship between Iran and the Jewish state helped the Iranians counterbalance potential threats from radical Arab regimes. It also opened doors for them in Washington as they sought access to U.S. military and economic aid.

Analysts are inclined to divide the history of the Iran-Israel relationship into two main chapters. From its establishment in 1948 up to the Iranian Revolution in 1979, Israel enjoyed cordial relations with Iran. The Shah’s regime did not formally recognize the Jewish state, but Israel had a permanent delegation in Tehran that served as an unofficial embassy. Israel purchased a significant portion of its oil from Iran and helped transfer oil from Iran to international markets through the Eilat-Ashkelon

pipeline. Both Tehran and Tel Aviv perceived Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser—whose pan-Arabist agenda, backed by Moscow, encouraged the toppling of pro-Western regimes in the Middle East, including Iraq—as a threat to their national interests. In keeping with its Cold War strategy, Washington encouraged growing military and trade ties between Iran and Israel, which in the early 1970s, were transformed into America's "strategic assets" in the Persian Gulf (Iran) and Eastern Mediterranean (Israel).

But then—or so the conventional wisdom goes—everything changed. The Shah was ousted and the Ayatollah Khomeini and his band of radical mullahs replaced the Pahlavis and adopted a violent anti-American ("Great Satan") and anti-Israeli ("Little Satan") agenda. This supposedly explains why today we are facing the prospect of a full-blown military conflict between Iran and Israel and/or the United States.

Not so, argues Parsi, who proposes that when it comes to the Israel-Iran relationship, *plus ça change*—the Iran Revolution, the coming to power of Likud, the end of the Cold War—*plus c'est la même chose*. Mid-size regional military powers like Iran and Israel will come

and Muslim blocs. Similarly, after co-operating for several years with Israel and the United States to provide military assistance to the Kurds fighting for self-rule in Iraq, in 1975, the Shah cut off all military support to the Kurds after signing the Algiers Accords with Saddam. It seemed like a shocking betrayal of the Kurds—and of Israel and the United States. But in fact, the Shah operated all along according to his nation's interests. He had earlier supported the Kurds as part of a grand Iranian strategy of forcing Iraq to make sovereignty concessions to Iran in the disputed Shatt al-Arab waterway. In 1975, after Saddam realized that the Iraqi Kurdish military campaign could not be defeated as long as it received backing from Iran (and through Iran, from Israel and the U.S.), he agreed to Iran's demands for sovereignty over half of the disputed waterway, which had always been Tehran's long-term goal.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, the strategic calculations that drove the Israeli-Iranian partnership between 1948 and 1979, including Israel's periphery doctrine, survived the Iranian Revolution, the end of the Cold War, and the first Gulf War. In the 1980s, fears that Saddam's Iraq would defeat Iran led Israeli Defense Minister Shimon

for the tension that exists today between Washington and Tehran on the policies of Israel. In the 1990s, as Parsi sees it, Prime Minister Peres, hoping that the Oslo process and globalization would help Israel make peace and integrate itself into the Arab "interior," turned the periphery doctrine on its head. He demonized the Islamic Republic as the leader of a global, radical Islamicist menace that supposedly threatened not only Israel but also America and its Arab allies. This strategy was evolving at the time when the Iranians under President Rafsanjani were trying to move toward détente with the United States. But according to Parsi, the Israelis and their supporters in Washington were successful in persuading the Clinton administration to isolate Iran, an approach that has remained in place ever since. They also tried to sabotage any attempt at rapprochement between Washington and Tehran that could elevate Iran to the position of a recognized regional power and threaten Israel's status as America's main ally in the Middle East.

Seen from this perspective, Israel and its supporters are basically attempting to tip the balance of power in the Middle East in their favor by isolating Iran. Parsi suggests that at the end of the day, such an approach runs contrary to America's interests in stabilizing Iraq and the rest of the Persian Gulf, which could be accomplished by working with Tehran. Israel also needs to understand that its drive to maintain its dominant military position in the region and prevent Iran from asserting its own regional position is not viable in the long term.

Indeed, as Parsi argues, it's in the national interest of both the United States and Israel to co-opt Iran as a pragmatic partner in the Middle East. But we seem to be heading in the opposite direction. ■

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ISRAEL IS ATTEMPTING TO TIP THE BALANCE OF POWER IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

together when they conclude that they share common interests and part ways when those interests diverge. Most of the time, they will operate in the gray strategic zone—where the line separating ally from rival is fuzzy—that seems to be the dominant reality of the Middle East.

As Parsi points out, even at the height of the partnership between Iran and Israel, the two governments recognized that they needed to maintain a diversified strategic portfolio that reflected their conflicting national interests. Hence, in 1975, the Shah instructed his diplomats to vote in favor of the UN General Assembly Resolution 3379, which equated Zionism with racism, as part of an effort to placate members of the Arab

Peres to press the Reagan administration to help Iran's ayatollahs, who despite their hostility toward the Jewish state were encouraging Israel to provide them with military assistance against Iraq and lobbying Washington to weaken its support of Saddam. In fact, Parsi seems to believe that despite the harsh rhetoric coming out of Tehran against the Jewish state and from Tel Aviv against the Islamic Republic, common national interests could have overridden the ideological constraints that made it difficult to revive the pragmatic partnership that existed during the Cold War and before the Iranian Revolution.

Parsi places most of the responsibility

[*The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It*, David A. Bell, Houghton Mifflin, 432 pages]

Ideology Arms Itself

By William Anthony Hay

DURING A BUDGET DEBATE in February 1792, William Pitt the Younger informed the House of Commons that never had there been a time “when, from the situation of Europe, we might more reasonably expect fifteen years of peace.”

Within a year, war with Revolutionary and Napoleonic France had dashed such expectations, though few predicted the onset of general war. Seasoned European observers assumed that France's domestic troubles rendered it harmless. Only Edmund Burke, the great contrarian of British politics in the 1780s, viewed the French Revolution as an armed doctrine waging war on social order and anticipated the consequences.

In *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It*, David Bell provocatively argues that total war—the unconstrained drive to secure complete victory by any means necessary—emerged from the French Revolution and the 23 years of fighting that followed. Revolutionary ideologies gave Napoleon Bonaparte the means to seize power, and his bid to dominate Europe transformed warfare. The unprecedented mobilization of populations and resources, combined with the abandonment of restraints, set a new model that demanded absolute victory—no room existed for compromise. By presenting an existential challenge to Napoleon's new order, insurgents drove authorities to abandon limits and adopt measures little short of extermination. Such campaigns forged a concept of war that continues to shape modern understandings of conflicts large and small.

Although it seems paradoxical for total war to follow an enlightened age that aspired to universal peace, Bell draws the connection between the extremes. The hope that one final conflict might transform society tantalized those who thought only artificial institutions, and the monsters who sustained them, prevented humanity from achieving its natural harmony. Revolutionaries thus embraced war for the sake of peace; to flinch from whatever violence might be necessary would be a betrayal of their noble aspirations. Georges Danton's chilling reference in 1791 to “the exterminating angel of liberty” expressed a sense of war as an expiation of sin. It offered a decadent society a way forward to redemption. Thus the nightmare of total war became intertwined with the dream of universal peace.

By contrast, 18th-century Europeans had previously accepted war as part of life, treating it as a means for states to pursue specific objectives. Rulers weighed costs against benefits and imposed limits on violence. These attitudes reflected a backlash against the brutality of the wars that had followed the Reformation and the breakdown of medieval political institutions, but they also derived from other values. Bell sketches a culture built upon order, balance, and restraint in which public culture among the elite imposed demanding standards of self-control. Nobles performed roles according to set rules, the violation of which brought ostracism and ridicule. Army officers identified themselves as noblemen rather than military professionals, and they followed an aristocratic rather than a professional code. However artificial the old regime's conventions might have been, they protected noncombatants and limited the ferocity of war during an age in which the lethality of weapons had increased.

The cultural transition Bell describes in *The First Total War* amounts to what Scottish thinkers of the time called “a revolution in manners.” It came gradually at first. A memoirist later reflected, “We were walking on a carpet of flowers and did not notice the abyss beneath.”

Feeling displaced reason and self-control as the guiding social principle. Widely read philosophers attacked war as contrary to human nature and criticized the existing social order as an impediment to peace. International politics became increasingly competitive, and French writers came to view Rome's total destruction of Carthage as a parallel to their country's competition with Britain.

When the dam broke in 1789, ideological currents were released that had previously been mere abstractions. The desire to tear down society completely and rebuild it from scratch made any continuity with the past impossible. A May 1790 debate over the king's power to wage war severed chivalry from warfare and at the same time broke the bonds of service between crown and nobility. Instead of fighting for their king, Frenchmen took up arms to promote ideals. The outbreak of war with Austria and other powers aiming to suppress the revolution accelerated the dynamic. Violence offered a cleansing release, and the prospect of achieving the millennium through a final convulsive effort set the new tone. Ideological war demanded a total commitment that ruled out compromise or mercy.

The clash between revolution and counter-revolution in the Vendée between 1793 and 1796 presented the former with an existential challenge. The suppression of the insurgency by the new French government set a paradigm that lasted for decades. The people of the Vendée, a deeply conservative region in western France where the Catholic Church commanded great loyalty, had gained nothing from the revolution save higher taxes and conscription. Attempts to suppress Christianity detonated revolt in a rough country almost designed for resistance. Early successes produced a brief chance for the counterrevolutionaries to march on Paris. The French government responded with a notorious war of extermination that Bell calls “so gruesome that historians have never really stopped to consider just how fantastical it was in the first place.” The sheer

sadism astonishes. Troops were ordered to kill all living things. Women and children became targets in efforts that rival more recent horrors in Cambodia and Rwanda. When bayonets and gunfire proved insufficient, authorities drowned masses of prisoners in barges sunk in the Loire. By defining opponents as a pestilence to be wiped out by any means necessary, the government cast aside all limits. Rejecting the term "genocide," Bell adjudges the suppression of the revolt to be "a ghastly crime, as well as an indelible stain on the Revolution."

Events in the Vendée occurred in a wider context, and Bell describes war during the 1790s as a "meaningful and dynamic activity in its own right." Emigration among the officer corps and the opening of military careers to talent ratcheted up a Hobbesian competition in which the most ruthless and devious thrived. Militarism emerged as soldiers formed a distinct professional class apart from civilians. Romantic transcendence replaced service and self-sacrifice as the ethos of the army. Napoleon Bonaparte and other generals climbed to power over the wreckage of the old regime. The Grande Armée gained power, prestige, and profit from war, and part of Napoleon's success lay in making warfare pay for itself. He won political support by rewarding soldiers through conquest—but that required more and more war. Peace would remove the glue that held Napoleon's support together and give adversaries a chance to turn back events. Only total victory could provide the security he demanded. Indeed, the quest for absolute security became a central feature of total war as armies sought to inflict a Carthaginian peace on their foes

Older accounts describe the revolution as reaching its end by the later 1790s, but Bell stresses a continuity lasting until 1815. The new militarism had made possible Napoleon's career, and his coming to power merely changed its focus. Napoleon quashed the turbulence of the 1790s that foreign critics dubbed anarchy, but he never aimed at restoring the old regime. Instead he put the army in charge. This new prestige and privilege

set the military not just apart but above the rest of society. Treaties that ended the French Revolutionary Wars only marked a pause in his struggle for European hegemony. Napoleon could not tolerate foreign rivals who might resume their challenge given a chance. Shifting the costs of war onto the conquered made war pay, but it also demanded constant vigilance against revolt. The whole dynamic required an absolute victory that pushed Napoleon to reject compromise with Britain and eventually attempt the conquest of Russia.

Just as the transformative project of the Revolution pushed the Vendée to revolt, Napoleon's occupation policies created insurgencies in Calabria, the Tyrol, and especially in Spain. Harsh repressive measures provoked backlash and further resistance. Francisco Goya captured the new world order in his acclaimed series of paintings "Disasters of War," depicting the struggles in Spain. Even where opposition did not exist, the need for resources alienated local groups. Total war did not allow France to impose its will on the enemy, but simply increased the violence on both sides. Although Napoleon's downfall came from the combined armies of Austria, Prussia, and Russia (all backed by British gold), struggles on the periphery bled his regime and goaded him into overreaching.

Napoleon left a legacy his contemporaries found more toxic than intoxicating. Lord Liverpool saw war itself as revolutionary in the context of the 1810s and peace as the essential precondition for stability. The statesmen who vanquished Napoleon made a concerted effort to create a stable international system that would impose constraints on war. Far from turning back to an old order that could not be restored, Metternich and his colleagues faced the challenge of rebuilding on shaky ground. They largely succeeded, as total war was banished for a century. Even when colonial wars turned brutal, conflicts in Europe remained limited. This renewed stability allowed bourgeois civilization to flourish until another general war brought cataclysm in 1914.

Given Bell's description of total war as a culturally rooted phenomenon, it is worth noting how wider social trends shaped its subsequent history. Assumptions that constrained both violence and the pursuit of power during the 19th century gave way to different premises. Social Darwinism and Marxism, along with the Wilsonian project of making the world safe for democracy, provided intellectual underpinnings for a new round of total wars. The desire for absolute security, faith in the transformative power of violence, and a willingness to demonize adversaries characterized 20th-century warfare. Although the comparison lies beyond the scope of the book, the First World War had a similar impact as did the French Revolution in removing institutional constraints and feeding a cycle of violence.

Bell's vivid account of a defining era written with an eye on today's headlines. His interpretation shatters cherished myths about the French Revolution and Napoleon and casts both in a new light. What had once been seen as liberation from the stifling rule of king, church, and nobility comes into focus as the repudiation of moral restraint. Burke saw clearly what the Revolution would bring, and there is no better thinker to turn to in making sense of the upheavals of the 20th century.

No conflict since 1945 matches in scale or scope the struggles Bell describes, but he makes a convincing case that the logic of total war survives. It offers tempting possibilities for those seeking quick solutions to inexorable problems—especially when others do the dirty work required. How total war can be brought within limits presents what may become a defining question in the 21st century. Prudence and realism may be out of step with the polarized public discourse in the United States over the past decade; nevertheless, they offer the best hope for an answer. ■

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Brown-Eyed Girl

Oh, the hope-draining, soul-crushing tiresomeness of it. I find in *Psychology Today* a piece called “Ten Politically Incorrect Truths about Human Nature,” explaining

various aspects of behavior in Darwinian terms. The smugness of that “politically incorrect” is characteristic of those who want a sense of adventure without risk. Nothing is more PC than an evolutionary explanation, unless it explains obvious racial differences that we aren’t supposed to talk about.

The authors are going to explain why we mate as we do. “Blue-eyed people,” they write, “are considered attractive as potential mates because it is easiest to determine whether they are interested in us or not.” Or men like blue eyes because, since eyes dilate when the owner is interested and since blue eyes better show a large pupil, men will know when women are interested. This produces more children.

Ponder the solemn fatuity of this. Does any reader over the age of 13 believe that women with any sort of eyes have trouble letting a man know when they are interested? The authors need to get out more.

Why is this sort of storytelling so widely engaged in when an alert porcupine would reject it? Because it is PC. The authors would find an evolutionary explanation for a loose doorknob.

To be fair, the greater reproductive success of the blue-eyed does explain why they predominate around the planet, with the exception of small population pools such as China, Africa, the Arab world, Southern Europe, Japan, India, Mexico, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and South and Central America. It’s because men in all those dark-eyed, underpopulated places can’t tell when women are interested.

Next, the authors say that blonde hair evolved because it loses luster with age, signaling to a man that a woman is too old to have healthy offspring.

This would seem to indicate that blondes evolved after the invention of shampoo, since the hair of women who never bathe is presumably something short of lustrous. Doubtless men married to blondes—marriage seems to be something of a pattern—stop boinking them when their hair dulls, while men married to brunettes keep at it, producing the swarms of defective kids that one usually sees in China, Mexico...

Again, note the absurdity. Do you have difficulty distinguishing between brunettes of 15 and 55, despite dentistry, hair conditioners, and facial creams? Say the authors, bloneness evolved in Scandinavia because women were covered with clothes and, without hair-luster as a signal, men couldn’t tell how old they were. This explains why so many young Eskimo men mate with grandmothers.

Next, breasts. The authors assert that men like big-breasted women because big ones sag at an early age, warning that the gal is too old to have healthy progeny. This is wonderfully silly. If big hooters discouraged further reproduction, the evolutionary benefit to the woman would seem exiguous, and big boobs ought to vanish.

An assumption underlying most discussions of the subject is that mating is entirely physical. The man takes the woman with the biggest breasts and bluest eyes. Perhaps this could be demonstrated with water buffalo. It isn’t what I see among people.

Rather, men want a woman who is reasonably cute, not fat, and, by whatever the standards of the particular man, likeable. Conducive to the latter condition are brains, sense of humor, minimal bitchiness, and being a decent human being. With the exception of brains, these are not evolutionarily respectable categories.

Yet in my experience, bright, vivacious, good-humored, dark-haired, and small-bazoomed easily trumps the reverse.

In general, a difficulty with grasping the evolutionary logic here is that of knowing whether it is thought to apply to the civilized. One reads in numerous sources that mankind, having left Africa, moved to colder climes and evolved greater intelligence to deal with the problems of survival in cold places. The implication is that intelligence increases fitness and should lead to the production of more offspring.

But what one sees today is that the bright have fewer children than the dull, and whole populations of the heretofore fit are rapidly diminishing. If fitness is measured by reproductive abundance, then fitness has diminished mightily in a few decades.

Is intelligence not a constituent of fitness? Or has natural selection stopped—assuming, or course, that it worked up to some point? Or is something else going on?

To force mating into the mold of reductionist fitness-shopping, it is necessary to connect beauty and sexual attractiveness with fitness. This is easily done by making up stories. I can do it by the hour: Wide-set eyes improve depth perception and prevent death when jumping about on rocks. Even teeth cut food more efficiently, avoiding the metabolic burden of inefficient chewing which, in time of famine, would lead to starvation. Ready laughter clears the lungs and avoids pneumonia. Shiny blonde hair reflects sunlight better and makes it easier for men to find fertile women at a distance.

But it reeks of improvisation, of beginning with a conclusion and putty-knifing the logic. I think of those millions of pitiful Chinese women, sobbing quietly in corners, “Oh, how can I let him know I’m interested when I have these horrible dark eyes? Maybe I can write him a letter...” ■

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